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The El Dorado of To-Day

WITH NOTES ON URUGUAY AND CHILE

BY

W. H. KOEBEL

With One Hundred and Twenty-three Illustrations

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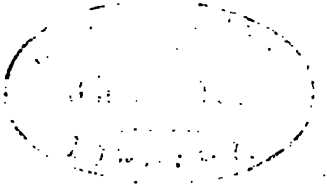

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PREFACE.

In his desire to acknowledge the valuable assistance which friends in Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile have rendered in connection with this small work the author finds himself confronted by a difficulty. Where so many, out of pure goodwill and interest in their native or adopted land, have spared neither time nor trouble in placing their knowledge at his disposal, the compilation of a full list of the names of those to whom he is under an obligation would be impossible.

So far as the city of Buenos Aires is concerned, the writer desires to express his cordial thanks for the assistance received at the hands of his compatriots, and more especially to those numerous members of the Strangers', English, Hurlingham, and Lomas clubs who accompanied him in his explorations of the metropolis and its surroundings. As regards the various Estancieros whose guest he had the pleasure ***of being, it suffices to say that the famed hospitality of the " Camp " is indeed worthy of its reputation.***

He desires to thank in especial the following gentlemen for assistance received in matters dealing with both town and " Camp " :—

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Mr. Henry Moody, of Buenos Aires, has permitted the use of some views of that city, and Mr. Charles Frost has very kindly supplied a number of the photographs taken by him in Mendoza, the Andes, and Chile, when in the company of the author.

The matter of several sketches which have appeared in the "Globe" and "Manchester Guardian" has been incorporated in this book by the courtesy of the editors.

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GONZALEZ RAPID, PATAGONIA.

VIEW OF BAKER RIVER.

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MODERN ARGENTINA.

INTRODUCTION.

There exists probably no other civilised country of the magnitude of Argentina of which less is known in Europe. For some reason or other the Republic is but hazily pictured in the minds of those who are sufficiently well informed upon other topics. The questions to which a returned South American has to submit are in themselves sufficient proof of this. Details of San Francisco, for instance, are occasionally begged by those who believe the Northern town to be somewhere in the neighbourhood of Buenos Aires. One is asked whether the country be bare or timbered, flat or mountainous, if its climate be hot or cold. The questions may be natural enough; but it would be as easy to reply off-hand as to the peculiarities of a Continent. Argentina owns districts as large as a European country that are wooded; others, equally extensive, that are all but treeless. It is flat in that it possesses thousands of square miles of plain, while in dealing with mountains it can produce the Andes as a trump card. One may broil in the Chaco, and shiver with cold in Southern Patagonia. The difference, in fact, between the Northern and Southern climates is as marked as that between the temperatures of Italy and Iceland. Indeed, to expect a single representative type of anything whatever throughout the vast

tracts of Argentina would be as unreasonable as to look for uniformity in Africa, from Egypt to Cape Colony.

That which, perhaps, has least of all been realised on the part of the general public is the important rôle which this Republic is undoubtedly destined to play in the world's affairs. It is true that Argentina has now been colonised for little short of four hundred years; but, so far as its present position is concerned, it is to all intents and purposes a new country. Its vast resources and wealth have lain fallow for centuries. In the distant past the Jesuits made strenuous and successful efforts to place the land upon the road to its proper development. Agriculture, viticulture, fruit-farming, mining, and many other industries beyond were started and fostered by them. Political and other causes, however, stepped in to delay, if not altogether to arrest, a progress that promised so well. Until recent years the country has been content to wrest from the land sufficient to maintain itself and no more. The outer world saw but little of its produce, and the methods employed were, from the very nature of things, crude and wasteful in the extreme. Cattle were slaughtered for the cutting of a steak or some small portion of meat from each, while the rest of the carcase was left rotting upon the camp, a feast for the carrion birds. Mines were toyed with much after the manner in which a child disturbs the topmost sands with its wooden spade. In the then restricted agricultural areas a successful crop came in the manner of a gift, almost unaided. It was the

era of happy-go-luckdom, when the fateful word "mañana" had a far more real significance than now.

Then came the revolution—a far more important one than any mere political outburst to which Argentina has been subjected. The system of chilling and freezing meat was undoubtedly one of the chief factors which made this possible. The Republic awoke all at once to the realisation of the possibilities which its lands held; and, when once awake, the ball of progress was set rolling with remarkable speed. Pedigree bulls and fine stock generally were imported in order that the increasing herds should gain in quality. Agriculture followed, to rival in importance the breeding of sheep a cattle, while the railways spread their tentacles ever more widely over the land.

There are many who hold the opinion that the progress of Argentina and its consequent accumulation of wealth has been brought about too rapidly for the ultimate good of the Republic. According to these, the mere fact that the present prosperity of the country is unexampled is in itself an omen of evil for the future. On the other hand, when it is taken into consideration that not one tithe of those rich lands which lie in readiness for the ploughshare has yet been developed, the present welfare might surely be looked upon with more justice as the forerunner of a prosperity on a yet larger scale.

CHAPTER I.

THE MODERN ARGENTINE.

The Composition of Society—Cosmopolitan Elements—The Argentine Aristocracy—The Source of its Wealth—Some Manners and Customs—Domestic Life—The Argentine Lady—Young Argentines.

When all is said and done, the most important feature of a country is represented by the people who dwell within it. For this reason it may be well to turn first of all to the inhabitants of this Southern Republic. From the point of view of nationality, the term Argentine embraces a wide field of humanity. The various communities that go to form the nation may be classified thus:—

I.—The descendants of the "Conquistadores" and of the subsequent Spanish immigrants who settled in the land during the period of the Spanish occupation.

II.—The descendants of immigrants of other nationalities. The Basques, although they come from either slope of the Pyrenees, may come within this category. So far as predominance is concerned, the Italian greatly outnumbers the representatives of any other nation.

III.—The Gaucho-Argentine, i.e., the descendants of those Spaniards and others who have intermarried with the Indians.

PLAZA VICTORIA, BUENOS AIRES.

AVENIDA DE MAYO, BUENOS AIRES.

PABELLON ARGENTINO, BUENOS AIRES.

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IV.—The natives proper of Patagonia and of the Chaco. Except for picturesque purposes these may be considered as more or less of a negligible quantity.

V.—The children of foreigners resident in the country. By Argentine law these latter, if born within the Republic, become its citizens from that fact alone.

It is from these elements that is formed the Argentine Nation, as it at present exists. An Olla Podrida of all nationalities, its composition is bewilderingly heterogenous. The result is, nevertheless, satisfactory. It is true that, up to the present, the vast amount of enterprise which has been lavished upon the country has been conducted almost entirely by foreigners. Indeed, it may be said that the Argentine—more especially the landowner—has floated to prosperity on the back of English capital and Italian labour. Yet the force of example and the spur of inter-marriage has told. To use an Americanism, the Argentine is a live man in a live country.

The nation, of course, is still in the making. Indeed, it is possible even now to watch the formation of new communities which is actually in process. The development of social grades here vies in rapidity with the opening up of the land. As a natural sequence, the more picturesque attributes of the Argentines are becoming lost to sight beneath the spirit of hard and fast modernism. In common with every other Republic, Argentina possesses its aristocracy—not that of the old Spanish régime,

which is to all intents and purposes extinct, but a more recent upper ten of its own. It is primarily an aristocracy of money, yet it differs widely from the usual conception of the kind. The Argentine magnate must not be confused with his harder-headed Northern brother who has attained his fortune only after strenuous commercial struggles. Unlike this latter, he has watched the automatic growth of a wealth for which he has to thank the continuous increase in the value of land; thus he has been content to study the politer arts, while his income waxed yearly more imposing through no effort of his own.

The grandfathers of these sons of fortune had doubtless no inkling of what lay in store for their descendants. Honest, frugal farmers who looked upon their broad lands as little beyond the source of food and shelter, they lived the simplest of lives, varied only by an occasional outburst of blood-letting. Then arrived the period when the land rose in price by leaps and bounds. An acre that would joyfully have been exchanged for an old sombrero became an asset of importance; a league that might have been diced for and lost with scarcely a pang, grew to represent a small fortune.

Thus Juan or Pedro became rich, though to all intents and purposes he remained in ignorance of the fact. To one of his simple nature the money possessed no value save to purchase better and larger herds. His own existence he continued precisely as before. It was left to his son to discover the wider significance of this fortune that had come to him,

as well as the revelations which the exploration of the hitherto unknown outer world induced. To his son, in turn, the new order of affairs comes as a natural and accepted thing. Educated in Europe, he will visit Paris, London, and other centres periodically throughout his after life. He cultivates racehorses, plays golf and baccarat, shoots pigeons, and usually speaks two or three languages.

This uppermost stratum, in fact—the last which Argentine society has flung up—is, as a whole, well educated and sufficiently able to hold its own in any of the polished corners of the globe. It lives its life in an altogether up-to-date and European fashion, although many of its habits and customs, virtues and vices included, are more exotic and graceful. Many have taken to sport, as we know it, with a profound enthusiasm. They are becoming more and more acquainted with the true spirit that contests of the kind demand. It is true that the desire to win at any cost has not yet been altogether eliminated. The Argentine is, perhaps, just a little addicted to that "slimness" which permits the employment of a trick to win where he would otherwise have lost. But, if he occasionally resort to such practices, it is from no love of meanness itself. He takes something of an ancient Grecian pride in the cuteness of such performances. As likely as not, he will tell one about it afterwards, and expect one to laugh with him in appreciation of it.

The lives of these magnates lie in smooth and pleasant places. Each will own an establishment in Buenos Aires that ranks little beneath a palace.

In his own winter he will frequently seek the European summer; in the hottest season he will retire to the cooler surroundings of his own estancia, and, should time chance to hang heavy upon his hands, he will buy a new race-horse, or dabble just a little in politics.

In eloquence, the modern Argentine has lost little of that fluency which distinguishes the old world Spaniard. He is much addicted to speechifying, and, so far as this is concerned, he is rather the gainer, for he possesses a sense of humour far more acute than any which his ancestors ever knew. In all things he aims at smartness, and usually attains that end—with one notable exception. The appearance of his domestic staff leaves everything to be desired. One may see a perfectly appointed carriage, for instance, whose appearance is marred by the slouching figure of an anarchistic looking person upon the box. It is much the same with all; valets, maidservants and grooms have, as a rule, the air of honest bourgeois, who wisely study comfort rather than appearances. How far this is the result of the Republican spirit or of mere slackness it is difficult to say.

In domestic life the Argentine, though a little prone to make his wild oats perennial, shows himself genuinely attached to his family. So much is this the case that he is frequently loth to permit marriage itself to sever the older standing ties. Thus it is no uncommon thing for an Argentine when he marries to espouse the whole of his wife's family as well as herself. A father-in-law will gladly add

to his house or set apart a portion of it in order to meet with the new arrangements. In this way a son or daughter-in-law becomes a genuine addition to the family.

So far as the Argentine ladies are concerned, their chief claim to distinction lies in their femininity, by which amongst other things it may be understood that they represent the antithesis of extreme athleticism. If one of these should chance to attempt golf she will succeed in footling her strokes in quite a pretty manner, indulging in many little protests concerning her complexion the while. She has suffered in the past, of course, restrictions similar to those imposed upon the sex in Spain. She is, nevertheless, commencing to regard the Northern methods of camaraderie between men and women with less amazement than before. Indeed, that strictness of etiquette which has applied to herself is being insensibly relaxed. Boating excursions upon the River Tigre, the sands at Mar del Plata, and other occupations of a nature tending to modify the more adamantine conventionalities are commencing to show evidence of their work.

That these ladies are charming goes almost without saying. It has been reproached them that the neighbourhood of mid-day is a late one at which to rise, that a couple of hours spent on the toilet is too much, and that the rouge and powder puff which come into occasional use are unfair aids to beauty. Be that as it may, it must be admitted on the part of those who are free from prejudice that the end achieved justifies as a rule the means

employed. The Argentine lady is a connoisseur both in beauty and in her own relation to the phase. She has made a study of herself and of her own points, from a feminine point of view very rightly. She is perfectly acquainted with what may be termed her leading feature, and arranges herself so that this is brought into the greatest prominence.

The lineaments of many of these ladies would seem to have been cast from one mould. To all appearances, moreover, intermarriage has, if anything, accentuated the almost perfect features and exuberant beauty of the traditional Spaniard. Her carriage is altogether graceful; she will glide through life in the manner of a swan until the ponderousness of a somewhat early maturity intervenes. If there is one thing which may be alleged against her it is the quality of her voice; this frequently falls far behind her other attractions in grace. The delivery is of the sing-song order, and, when excited, the timbre is inclined to be both raucous and nasal. But such a condition of affairs, if unfortunate, interferes not in the least with the metaphor of the swan.

She is a little prone to look upon the English girls with whom she comes into contact as fast—if for no other reason than for the greater freedom of speech accorded the latter. But in this she is inconsistent, forgetful of the eloquence of her own eye, for this is the weapon of her choice. An Argentine girl can express in a couple of its flashes as much as many a northerner could articulate in a quarter of an hour. Once married, however, she becomes intensely

domesticated, and worships her children with a whole-heartedness that is occasionally detrimental to the modesty of the younger generation.

These youngsters, as a general rule, are somewhat precocious and spoiled. It is the boast of an Argentine mother that the manners of her children even at the tenderest age befit them rather for the drawing-room than for the nursery. As a result, they are permitted to mingle at will in the amusements of their elders. The sight of a child of seven or eight years old perching his little body late at night in the midst of a dinner party at a restaurant is no uncommon one. Moreover, the youngster, fully appreciating the right, permits little conversation on any subject whatever without the expression of some more or less matured opinion of his own. Indeed, this comradeship between infancy and middle age is occasionally carried to strange lengths. One may occasionally see Argentines even of the most advanced type playing baccarat for high stakes with the assistance of small boys in knickerbockers, who follow their fathers' luck with intense interest, and are by no means backward in offering suggestions concerning the play. But, with increasing years, and a course of European training, the youngster is wont to shape far better than might have been anticipated, until he is ripe for the assumption of his legitimate place in society.

CHAPTER II.

POLITICS AND STRIKES IN ARGENTINA.

Some Ethics of Government—Integrity, past and present—Some Methods of Contracting—The Raison d'être of Revolution—Strikes and their Political Aspect—The Relationship of Buenos Aires to the Land—Argentine Officials—Conscription—Growing solidity.

There are doubtless many Europeans who are convinced that the Argentine method of government is by revolution alone. It is true that within the last twenty years there have been three serious internal struggles and a number of minor attempts to readjust power and the existing situation. But, to put the case mildly, it must be remembered that the occasions when the Republic enjoys peace are at least more numerous than those when strife is raging. On the other hand, it may be said that during many of these periods of supposed calm a furnace of discontent has been raging directly beneath the thin surface of tranquility. So far as revolutions are concerned, those who favour them assert that the system is fairer and more expeditious than that of the general election as carried on in Argentina. Staider folk retort that they interrupt business, are a nuisance in general, and that, moreover, it is nearly always the harmless spectators who get shot during the scuffles.

As a matter of fact the government of the Republic has undergone of late a greater improvement than has been generally realised. It is now free from

PALERMO, BUENOS AIRES.

THE RIVER TIGRE, PART OF REGATTA COURSE.

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those opera-bouffe and financial-pirate taints which formerly clung to it. Its constitution is admirable, and the majority of its laws are well framed. Whether they are carried out to the letter or not is a matter which concerns the personnel of the officials. Broadly speaking, it may be said that these are administered in the larger centres far more impartially than in the less populated and more remote districts of the Camp. In former times—and the barrier between modern and ancient history in Argentina is extremely slender—it is a matter of common knowledge that bribery was rampant in its most outrageous forms. Moreover, the briber was wont to receive much real, if illicit, benefit from the transactions. That such customs still obtain in a modified degree in out-of-the-way districts is undeniable. To tamper with the legal and official machinery of Buenos Aires and other large centres is altogether a different matter.

There are still a number of Argentines who enter the political field with the sole object of enriching their pockets, but the methods adopted savour little of the melodramatic villainy of the past. The procedure is modern, subtle, and hedged about with an apparent honesty worthy of the occasional European who slides from the grace of high places. To retire from politics with a purse as slender as it was at the commencement of the career is an act that is still regarded with admiration. But it no longer evokes that stupor of amazement with which the Argentines were once wont to greet such a feat. Two great men of the land, President Quintana and

General Bartolomé Mitré, who died recently within a couple of months of each other, bore reputations for financial integrity that were spotless to the point of austerity. Indeed, honesty has already become more general, less of a fad. It is such matters as government contracts and the like that put the commercial standard of honour to the test. There are yet upon occasions pickings to be derived from these, sufficient to satisfy the most voracious of plunderers.

The tales told concerning the methods of the contractors themselves are innumerable. Perhaps one of the most amusing of these is that which deals with some dredging operations which, as a matter of fact, took place, or were supposed to take place, just without the Argentine limits. Each day for months the barges laden with the dredged soil would put out to sea and return ostensibly for the carriage of more. But on the return of these craft it was patent to all that they were as deeply laden as when they set forth. As a matter of fact, the first mud dredged was never permitted to leave the interior of the barges. Thus the solemn farce was continued day by day. The procession of boats bearing the same soil came and went with unexpected energy and rapidity, while the contractor was credited in cash for each journey. All that was deepened, of course, was the extent of his pockets; but this sort of thing, after all, is not solely confined to South America.

With each year that passes the inhabitants of the Republic grow less inclined to indulge in revolution merely *pour passer le temps*. The chances, moreover, on the part of revolutionists, of position and

emoluments are far more risky than formerly. It was one thing, forty years or so ago, to play with the destiny of a country that contained a total population of a million and a half, the majority of whom, untaught and unthinking, would follow a chosen leader in sheep-like fashion. It is quite another matter to attempt the upheaval of a nation of over five million inhabitants, more especially when the land is one which abounds in prosperity, where education has secured a firm hold, and amongst whose people the dictates of common sense are commencing to battle against the worship of mere brilliancy—although it must be admitted that the latter asset still possesses a slight ascendancy over the former.

The fact is at last becoming clear to the Argentine that his nation is on its way to take its place amongst the great ones of the earth, and the comprehension of this has sobered him to a sense of his responsibilities. But, curiously enough, it is the very rapidity with which this prosperity has overtaken the land that has led, and is still leading, to disturbed and troublous times. Until Argentina attained to her present financial position the revolutions which occurred within her were the work of fiery politicians—Don Quixotes—eager to win a name, glory, power, and—incidentally—cash. The thing was effected with a rattle of drums and a fanfare. Nothing was further removed from its ethics than the spirit of commerce pure and simple. And now from the heights of this lofty, adventurous mood the storm area has shifted to

another and more homely pole—industrial discontent, and, in consequence, strikes.

As is usual in the case of these eloquent protests of labour, there is one section of the community which denies their *raison d'etre*, another which asserts that they should have occurred long before. Opinions on the subject would seem fairly equally divided. In order to review the actual situation it is necessary to go into matters which might seem to have no bearing upon it. Although at first it may be a little difficult to realise the reason, one of the chief causes of this industrial discontent lies in the manner in which the population of the country is distributed. It must be remembered that the total population of the Republic amounts to a little over five millions. Of this number the town of Buenos Aires alone claims over one million inhabitants. Indeed, at such a rate has this city developed that it has gone ahead out of proportion even to the Camp, notwithstanding the tremendous pace which this latter has set it.

Now it must be understood that it is upon the produce, animal and vegetable, of the Camp that Argentina depends for her very existence, to say nothing of her wealth. In comparison with this, the few urban manufacturies and industries that exist are insignificant, and of those which bring in wealth from without, there are none at all. Beyond those items which rank first—wheat, alfalfa, maize and live stock—wine, butter, and the timber of the far South and North are all products, direct or indirect, of the Camp. Buenos Aires, from its commercial point of view, exists alone for the handling of these. A poor

THE RIVER TIGRE.

THE RIVER TIGRE.

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harvest will leave none of its inhabitants unaffected. Bankers, brewers, solicitors, hotel-keepers—the very cabmen and paper boys will know it to their cost. A succession of a dozen crop failures, humanly speaking, an impossibility, would see the stately city of Buenos Aires ruined, crumbling, and as forsaken as a town of the dead.

Thus in a country that is purely pastoral and agricultural we have the spectacle of one townsman in every five of its population. Strictly speaking, the proportion of city dwellers is a little greater even than this when the populations of Rosario with its 130,000 inhabitants, Mendoza, Cordoba, and other towns are taken into consideration. There can be no doubt that the head of Argentina has outgrown its body, and of the two it is the head which is the more likely to fare worse. For taxation upon the land is benevolently light. Buenos Aires, on the other hand, pays dearly for its magnificence. The cost of the Boulevards, the imposing electric-lighting and waterworks, the palatial public buildings, and the rest of the adornments and paraphernalia of a great city—in this case upon a superb scale—rests upon its own inhabitants, and perhaps in an unfair measure upon the poorer classes of its denizens.

So far as these latter are concerned, it is true that wages have risen considerably of late years. At the same time the necessities of life have grown ever dearer in proportion, and the dissatisfaction of the workers increases rather than diminishes. Employers, moreover, state their inability to accord further rises in wages in view of the fact that in the

majority of cases they are paying all and more than the labour is worth to them. The issue, it would seem, does not lie in their hands; it rests rather with those who are responsible for an excess of ostentation, and the consequent increase of taxation, direct or indirect, which has more than kept pace with the heightening of wages.

Owing to this condition of affairs there is a certain element of danger in Argentine strikes, for they are bound in the long run to attain a political rather than an industrial significance. Indeed, signs of this have already made their appearance. From its own point of view the Government has a firm and admirable method of dealing with such ebullitions of discontent. The method is simple—the proclamation of a state of siege in the City. The phase is unnoticed by the ordinary citizen, although the penalties of truculence which attach to it are well enough understood and appreciated by the strikers. But just beneath the surface the turmoil has remained as fierce as ever for all its repression. Sufficient evidence of this was forthcoming when on the first of January, 1906, the time was considered ripe by the authorities for the raising of the state of siege. Hardly was the ink dry upon the signature of freedom when the strikes broke out afresh with a virulence that had never before been experienced. Railway operatives, tramway officials, cabmen, market porters and the humbler representatives of nearly every branch of industry came out with a rush to clamour fiercely for the betterment of their lot. Indeed, so deeply had the delirium of the strike

pile. Enterprising men who had attempted feats beyond their powers sat in exhausted attitudes upon trunks at street corners.

It was a *coup d'etat*. No move, it appeared, could have appealed more strongly to the sentiments of the Argentine public. Nevertheless after the first surprise the cabmen did not have matters all their own way. For one thing, the tramway officials, perceiving a chance of substantial gratuities, grasped it. One might see cars with piles of luggage stacked behind the driver, and passengers within them who seldom condescended to travel by so public a conveyance. The resourceful police official, moreover, decided to take a hand in the game. It was announced that the stricter traffic regulations, many of which had been allowed entirely to lapse, would be sternly enforced once again. The result was evident in the long strings of empty cabs which waited without the police stations while the drivers were suffering the penalties of fines within.

It is unfortunate that Argentine strikers do not invariably restrict themselves to such legitimate means of expressing dissatisfaction. Amongst certain branches of industry a regrettable amount of violence is brought into play. Many of the Italian immigrants possess tendencies that are anarchistic rather than socialistic. The numbers of killed and wounded in the ranks of both "blacklegs" and policemen attest in a lamentable fashion to this. Nevertheless, the Argentine legal arm is sufficiently strong and far-reaching to cope with these, and it is seldom that any such outrage is committed with impunity.

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To say that these strikes act as a cog upon the Argentine wheel of progress is a platitude. The phase is one which it would seem the fate of every nation to undergo. Yet here, in view of their growing frequency and gravity and of the fact that some measures of reform in the labour market are undoubtedly necessary, the sooner the existing situation is amended the better it will be for the country.

The cosmopolitanism of the Republic notwithstanding, Argentina is governed solely by the Argentines. As is only reasonable, no foreigner is permitted to sit in congress or to take any hand whatever in the legislature of the country. The system of election has in one sense progressed, that is to say where previously the candidate had but to buy the interest of the influential few, he has now to purchase the votes of the multitude. But this is perhaps a crude and arbitrary explanation of the somewhat genial methods which prevail. It would be wiser to say that the conspicuous absence of Red Tape at an election would seem to have the effect of rendering the Argentine character doubly accommodating. It is recorded that a candidate who stood by as the votes were recorded protested thus to a hostile voter, who apparently recognised no limits to the powers of his suffrage: "Hombre! to forget that one has been here once before is possible, but you have been twice already, and absent-mindedness ends with the second time. Therefore, amigo, do me the favour to keep the sunshine of your presence from this place henceforth!" But such easy tolerance on the part of the injured politician is a little suspicious in itself.

One cannot refrain from the speculation as to how many satellites of his own were engaged in similar practices.

It is naturally in the comparative solitude of the Camp that the opportunity is provided for the individual to soar above the law. Here the "Jefe Politico," a species of stipendiary magistrate and chief of police combined, wields a power that is practically boundless. His office creates him a valued friend or a dreaded enemy. Nevertheless, even if he be one of the more unfavourable members of the class, it is extremely seldom that he finds it worth his while to fall foul of a foreigner of any standing. At the same time, so far as estancieros are concerned, this maxim is recognised as all-important. When in doubt send a pair of carriage horses to the Jefe Politico! There never was a more remunerative present. For the official can be of service in countless ways. To say nothing of the weight that his official countenance will lend in the matter of small disputes, he is in a position actually to save his friends from incurring considerable expense. On occasions of revolutionary scares—mercifully growing more and more rare—squads of soldiers are wont to scour the country, visiting estancias for an official "loan" of horses. A private and timely intimation from the Jefe Politico will enable the majority of these to be driven into some secure spot sheltered from all eyes, while a few of the more ancient and useless may be left to be handed over with alacrity to the charge of the government.

Notwithstanding the many stories told against him,

the average Argentine official is by no means a bad fellow. On the contrary, if properly handled, he is obliging and courteous beyond the wont of his kind elsewhere. To take a grievance to him with loud-voiced bluster is usually to send him into a fit of the sulks and a consequent condition of apathy. To see him at his best one should seek even an obvious right as though it were a favour. When the Argentine and Spanish character is taken into consideration there is need for not the slightest "truckling" in the procedure. This once understood, it will be found that, instead of the expected grudging performance of the law, the appellant will have secured all and perhaps more than he had hoped for.

It is obligatory that each Argentine sub should serve a certain term in the ranks of the ar It is perhaps only natural that those who are li for this service should strain every nerve to escape from its trammels. The troops are much confined to barracks, in all probability from a sense of precaution. In the town of Buenos Aires, for instance, in the neighbourhood of which lie the chief barracks, one may see an occasional officer sauntering about the street, but the sight of the rank and file, when off duty, is practically unknown. Military crimes such as insubordination and assaults upon officers have increased rather than diminished in frequency of late. At the latter end of 1905, for instance, the murders of a number of officers followed close upon each other. The Argentine, as a matter of fact, is a poor appreciator of discipline, when applied to himself. The catchword of the land in prose, verse and

song is "Libertad." And when a private endures a real or fancied slight at the hands of a superior in rank, he takes the "libertad" of avenging it with revolver or knife.

Not that the Republic is in any way disposed to grind down its subjects. They enjoy, in fact, privileges of freedom almost as wide as those of an up-to-date constitutional monarchy. Although each Argentine is by temperament a politician, the liberty of the subject is—except in times of revolution—interfered with not in the least. Each may express his views—and express them with all the flowery eloquence and fire that constitute his birthright—in a speech punctuated by no police interjections. The government is well enough aware of the fact that, so long as the questions in point be abstract ones, there is little likelihood of the vocal volleys leaving anything more dangerous behind them than want of breath.

To treat Argentina metaphorically, it may be likened to soil flung up by a volcano. The cruder newness of it is waning; the corners are becoming smoothed down, the dangerous crevasses filled, and the crops of the earth are rising to consolidate the whole—all of which spells settlement.

CHAPTER III.

THE ENGLISH IN ARGENTINA.

A First Impression—Relations with Argentines—In the Town—In the Camp—Some Instances of Tactlessness—The Influence of Argentina upon the English—Lost Britishers—The Power of Sport—Services to Argentina—Some Misunderstandings and Amenities.

When in Rome to do nothing as the Romans do has frequently been brought forward as a reproach to the Britisher resident in foreign lands. Whether this charge is justified in Argentina remains to be seen. It stands to reason, of course, that those who emigrate to a land of such wide possibilities represent all types and classes. Amongst these there are without doubt many who start upon their journey to the Republic under the firm impression that they are bound for a spot which is practically a British colony. To such a one it is not until his journey's end that the comparative numerical insignificance of his countrymen in South America becomes patent. Even then the admirable, though perhaps ill-judged sturdiness of his convictions is wont to remain with him. For a while, at all events, the novelty of his environment does not in the least alter that mode of conduct which he had laid down for himself. Time and experience alone wear down those corners of his temperament which fit in least with their fresh setting. There is little doubt about the ultimate result, for in the end Argentina has a strange fashion of swaying and moulding those who come to her.

Upon his first arrival, it stands to reason that a considerable difference must lie between the ethics of John Smith of London or Manchester and those of José Miguel Peredo of Buenos Aires or Rosario. The former, for instance, is a little inclined to murmur "ape," with the same breath that flings his "Morning" in response to José's low bow and raised hat. José, in turn, the born enemy of curtness, will mentally compare the other to a bulkier animal. But the period of such incidents is merely transitory. Provided that John's stay in the country be of sufficient duration, there will come a time when he, too, will raise his hat and bow upon the slightest provocation. It does not do to tell him so upon his arrival; he will vouchsafe small thanks in return for the prediction.

In dealing with Anglo-Argentine relations, perhaps it would be as well at the outset to distinguish between the English who reside in Buenos Aires and other large towns, and those who pass their lives upon the Camp. In a community such as that of Buenos Aires, the Britisher, although he is necessarily much thrown into contact with foreigners, is surrounded by a number of his countrymen sufficient to cause him to be independent of other society. So far as the Argentines proper with their innate distaste for commerce are concerned, the proportion of these with whom he will meet in the course of his business is exceedingly small. Indeed, it is in the towns that the intercourse between the two races is least evident. Mutual relations are agreeable enough, but it is seldom that the represen-

natives of either nation penetrate to the domestic circles of the other.

One may hear something of a grievance on the part of a small section of these English who reside in Buenos Aires, by no means bitterly expressed, but a grievance for all that. They assert in the first place that, as often as not, the Argentine is insincere. This may or may not be the case, but from personal experience as well as from the actual incidents quoted as proofs it has been impressed upon me that this alleged insincerity is frequently to be accounted for by a misunderstanding in mannerisms and nothing beyond. The Argentine can be excessively polite when he wishes—the Argentine gentleman invariably is. Indeed, he will carry simple courtesy to a pitch that may delude a bluffer mortal into the belief that a life-long friendship has been offered off-hand. Whereas the other aimed at nothing beyond a concert pitch of amiability. Had the Britisher possessed some experience of the continent—of Europe—ere his advent in South America he would have been better able to judge such courtesy for what it was worth. As it is, some future happening will lead him to the supposed discovery of a flaw in the genuineness of the other's temperament. It is this type of person that in Spain, in response to his host's formula that house and contents were his guest's, would ejaculate "Thanks," and wire for a Pickford's van.

It is this same section, fortunately a small one, that is given to complain that the Argentine wilfully shuns the foreigner. The latter retorts that he would be only too pleased to enter into closer relations if the other

would merely trouble to attain some comprehension of himself and of his ways. But even between this self-sufficient section and the natives of the country there exists a paradoxical sentiment of passive cordiality. One hears nothing of those caustic remarks that residents in foreign countries are occasionally wont to indulge in. So far as the Argentines are concerned, if such are made one does not hear them; but I fancy they are not.

Extreme instances of tactlessness exist, of course. Indeed, it is difficult to view with patience the actions of a certain number of one's countrymen. One of the kind stood near me on the occasion of the removal of the body of General Bartholomé Mitré from its home to Government House, where it was to lie in state. The general had filled an heroic rôle in Argentine affairs, and the ceremony was conducted with all the pomp and splendour of a public function. As the cortège passed, the vast cosmopolitan crowd uncovered, but not to a man. One person there was who stood in a prominent place, pipe in mouth, and his hat set well back upon his head. As the car went past he surveyed it with a grin of mild amusement. There could, alas, be no doubt as to his nationality. The saving clause—one that justifies the story—was afforded by the behaviour of the other Englishmen present. The offender had disregarded their cries of "hats off!" until one of these, forcing his way through the crowd towards the too complacent person, neatly dislodged the hat from the head by means of a stick. Of protest on the part of the Argentines there had been none.

DOCKS, BUENOS AIRES.

GRAIN ELEVATORS, BUENOS AIRES.

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To turn from the topic of such annoying, if trivial errors of judgment, it is in the Camp that the relations between Englishman and Argentine may be seen to the best advantage. So far as the sentiments of the former are concerned, the Camp Argentine possesses just those qualities which rouse his admiration. He drinks in horse lore from his earliest years, rides to perfection, and, moreover, understands quite enough concerning stock-breeding as is good for those who deal with him. As often as not he is a keen shot, and he is wont to display all the pluck that is necessary in a "tight corner." Thus the representatives of either race, having so much in common, associate on a footing of intimacy bred of mutual respect. The influence of this condition of affairs upon the Britisher becomes evident before long. He loses much of his national diffidence; his conversation becomes more and more interlarded with Spanish phrases, and, while retaining his own individuality, he will follow the more obvious customs of the country with as much ease as though he had been bred to them.

The fascination which Argentina exercises upon immigrants of all classes is probably unique. It is unusual for dwellers in a foreign country to indulge in more than a passing interest in the land. In Argentina it is otherwise. Whatever be the reason, whether its inception lies in that thrill of pride with which the inhabitants of town and country alike regard those vast, rich lands, which can produce both cities and crops in such profusion, or whether the cause be more purely sentimental, is of small conse-

quence. The fact remains that within a very short time the erstwhile stranger has developed an affection towards the country which is all but patriotic.

The fruits of this, visible in his children, are somewhat astonishing. These latter, born in the Republic, Argentine by law, become almost invariably Argentine in very nature. They will speak Spanish in preference to English; indeed, if their parents permit it, they will refuse to employ the latter language at all. In all matters concerning nationality their tendency—entirely foreign to the race in other parts of the world—is to become oblivious of their British extraction. In sentiment they are more acutely Argentine than their co-republicans of older standing. That they may accentuate this they will even serve their military term with cheeriness, an experience detested by the rest of the nation. If in Europe, Paris will know them more intimately than London, while, wherever they may be, the blue and white of the Argentine flag will rouse them to enthusiasm, though the Union Jack leaves them politely unmoved. Thus these, together with many other Northerners, go to form a solid element in this surprising Argentine nation that is in the making.

This process of welding and consolidation has been at work now for several generations. In the towns, as has been explained, the results are less noticeable. In the Camp, on the other hand, one may meet with Browns, Jones, Robinsons, Campbells, and Mulroyds, who know no more of the British Isles than the average untravelled Argentine, who can speak no

word of English, and who are loth to believe that their grandparents employed any tongue other than Spanish. The personality of many of these affords an interesting study. One may mark, for instance, the features and stature appropriate to the owner of a British name joined with the lissom manners and soft speech of the South.

The community, moreover, is no small one. One may take a camp coach with its four horses and drive across country through the Estancias for a matter of ten leagues or so. Whichever be the direction chosen, it must be an unpopulous district indeed that cannot produce at least one representative of this class in the course of the drive. And ten leagues in Argentina represents a journey to be held as of no account whatever.

A yet quainter instance of the diffusion of English blood in Argentina may be quoted. But this latter is of sentimental rather than of material import, and has passed almost unnoticed. In San Juan, where the Indian strain is prevalent, one may remark a native here and there of as dusky a hue as the rest, but of taller stature. There is, moreover, some subtle distinction about him which marks him out from his companions. One may enter into conversation with one of these whose name, say, is Batiz. Then, should curiosity prompt a question as to that faint difference between him and the rest, the truth will leak out. The ancestors of the man Batiz bore quite another name. Ere its corruption it had rung to the very English sound of Bates. Batiz and many others are the descendants of a number of General

Beresford's soldiers, who were captured in the ill-fated expedition of 1806. They eventually made their way to San Juan and intermarried with the Indians. The result is Batiz, duskiness, and a little hut with mud walls.

There is a story told in the district of San Juan concerning one of these metamorphosed Islanders which the reader has full permission to accept with the utmost reserve. An Englishman who was particularly interested in the strangely fated waif set himself to teach the latter the tongue of his ancestors. He succeeded in a remarkably short time, but his pride was dashed with amazement at the idiom with which his pupil responded to the tuition. Mullalo had developed a brogue as broad as the Shannon. The matter was only cleared up when it was discovered that he claimed to be an off-shoot of the Hibernian Mullallys.

It has been said that in all matters connected with horseflesh the Argentine is in need of no instruction whatever. Tne same naturally applies to the ethics of horse-racing. In all other sports, however, the English have been, and still are, enthusiastic coaches of their native fellow-sportsmen. They have nursed the sporting proclivities of the others with the tender zeal that a mother might bestow upon a young child. New departures in this direction on the part of their pupils they have welcomed with whole-hearted glee. Should they themselves chance to get the worst of a game that they have inculcated, they will lose all sense of defeat in the pride of successful tutorship.

They have good reason to be proud. Although

HARVESTING.

STACKING.

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the matter may be sneered at by some as concerning nothing more weighty than sport, that which the English have effected in Argentina will stand to their unending credit. Football goals are now thickly dotted throughout the whole of Argentina, quite irrespective of whether there be any of the original introducers in their neighbourhood. The youth of the country has no further need of encouragement or of active aid. They have taken to the pastime as ducks to water. Football has become, to all intents and purposes, the national game of Argentina. Indeed, it is astonishing to view the firm and settled hold which this game has obtained on the general population in the course of a few years. The result demonstrates a vigour on the part of its inhabitants which promises well for the future of the Republic. The influence of the game, moreover, is already marked, and it is one undoubtedly of the most important character. To illustrate the rapidity of its growth, some years ago a man who carried a football would have been stigmatised as a peculiarly nauseating example of the "Loco Inglés"—mad Englishman; now a similar spectacle would cause the veriest *gamin* no further emotion than a speculation as to the possible powers of the player.

The mysteries of cricket are not yet generally understood, although, to turn to the more exclusive recreations, sculling and golf have both obtained a firm hold. The latter game is as popular in Argentina as in other parts of the world. The Argentines, who have so far played on the courses of English clubs, are now striking out for themselves.

They have formed a club of their own, to which are attached links that eclipse in pretensions all others in the country.

Athletic sports have been held on several occasions under British auspices in the Camp, and have been attended by marked success. Here, the Gaucho, though he has not yet taken a direct interest in Polo, has begun here and there to concern himself in the game in so far as to keep a sharp eye on ponies beneath the standard with a view to possible negotiations. But the time may well come when he, too, will place his teams in the field.

I have laid particular stress upon this process of sport inoculation which has been achieved by the English in Argentina, for the reason that the movement possesses a deeper importance than is contained in the contests themselves. A mutual affection for football, golf, and the like must necessarily lead to a closer understanding between the two races. In the political world itself all hitches, from an international crisis downwards, are surely half-way towards settlement already when their negotiation lies between representatives who have been accustomed to discuss approach shots together!

Peaceful relations between the two races are engendered by the absence of any real commercial rivalry. The Argentine is little concerned in active business, and the success of British enterprise means added wealth to the Republic. As a matter of fact, the services of the kind which have been rendered by these are beyond compute. It is they who have stood as the pioneers of all practical undertakings,

from railways to the drainage system. The Argentine makes no attempt to deny this. He retorts slyly that the Britisher has laboured at least as much for the benefit of his own pocket as for the disinterested welfare of the land. It would be strange if there were no truth in this. In the language of commerce—what pays the one, pays the other.

It is important that the humbler immigrant should remember that it is a blue and white flag with a blazing sun that waves over him, and that the emblem stands for other laws than those he has known. It was oblivion of this fact that caused the Welsh Colony founded in the South to fail, and in the end to be broken up altogether. Its members, perhaps from a mistaken sense of loyalty to the old country, refused to submit to any laws but those which they had previously known and respected. It was this stiffneckedness, admirable in many respects though it was, that led to the disintegration of the settlement and to wasted years. The Boer Colony, moreover, likewise founded in the South, is likely in the long run to suffer from similar reasons.

Whatever his opinion of the Englishman in lighter vein may be, there is one merit which the Argentine ungrudgingly allows him. It is that of his honesty. The latter is a virtue, it is held, to which the Englishman has a right to lay claim by the mere title of his nationality. It stands to reason that such a compliment would not be paid unless it had been well earned. Such sterling reputation is, of course, of material benefit in many instances. There are a number of Argentines who prefer to employ an

Englishman as their estancia manager, even thou
his efficiency be no greater than that of another.
lies in their own hands that this satisfactory state
affairs should continue.

CHAPTER IV.

BUENOS AIRES.

Its Status as a Capital—Rapidity of its Growth—Streets and Public Places—Palermo Park—The Central Produce Market—the Boca District—The Docks—La Plata River—Climate of the Town.

There are still a number of people upon the European side of the Equator to whom Argentina's Capital appeals as the somewhat nebulous centre of a faction-torn state. Doubtful as to whether its houses are of mud or of stone, they would class it at a venture with the chief town of an English minor county.

It is true that in the past Buenos Aires has laid but small hold upon the imagination. As one of the world's chief capitals it has made a very faint stir abroad. Indeed, there are not so many Europeans who are even aware that this city upon the banks of the La Plata can lay claim to such a title at all. But it is hardly possible that this ignoring of a great centre can endure much longer. With a population of over a million, with trade, streets, buildings, and docks all fitting to the number of its inhabitants, Buenos Aires cannot fail to press itself forward in the intellectual interest of the world to at least that extent to which it has become familiarised in financial circles.

It is the boast of the Porteño—the Buenos Airen—that there is nothing to be obtained in any other

world city which may not be found in the Argentine capital. The claim is justified in the main. It may be pleaded by its detractors that the city remains so far innocent of a "tube" or of any similar burrowing. With this exception, the greatest European towns have nothing to display that would astonish the Argentine.

If Buenos Aires has spread itself over the country with a mushroom growth, its evidences of social development have at least kept pace with its expansion. It is a town where electric tramcars speed swiftly, where newsvendors shout in hordes, and where the district messenger boys move at much the same pace as elsewhere. Here are Parks teeming with the Victorias that hold the superbly-costumed Argentine women, and here are trains that bear the business man forwards and backwards of a morning and evening between the commercial quarters and his suburban residence. It is a city of theatres, of restaurants, of vacuum house-cleaners, of great railway termini, of strikes, of giant advertisements, and of blocks in the traffic. By all of which it may be known for what it is—one of the largest and most modern of its kind.

The process of converting it from a city remarkable for nothing beyond size, into that which it is, has been effected within the last ten years. The rapidity of the metamorphosis is largely due to the numerous fingers which have been concerned in the pie of improvement. The representatives of many races have had to do with the moulding, for the town is probably the most cosmopolitan in existence. The

Argentine section, for instance, only just exceeds the half of the population, and of these themselves a considerable number are Argentine by law rather than race. From the Britisher and his European neighbours down to the Colony of Turks, each has betaken himself to that branch of industry which became him best. The pride of these aliens, moreover, in this great enterprise which they have helped to build up is deeper, or at all events more obvious, than that of the born Argentine himself.

The main city is laid out in blocks after the North American system. The convenience is only to be appreciated by those who have lived in a town modelled thus. One hundred numbers are allotted to each block, so that when in search of a certain establishment it is possible to compute exactly the distance to be traversed. For instance, if the address of the house required were number 500, Calle San Martin, one might turn into the latter from another to light upon the number 10. It would then be obvious that one's destination lay five blocks further on.

The streets in the centre of the town are for the most part far too narrow for the traffic they bear. They are relics of those old days when Buenos Aires lay, small and sleeping. Narrow thoroughfares meant shaded walks then—as, indeed, they do now; but shade was a more valuable asset under the old régime when there was little else to do but to sit in it, than it is now in the centre of a bustling city. The buildings that line the streets have grown steadily in size, but the roadways themselves have remained unaltered; and as the city property is

growing more valuable each year the difficulty of the widening process is increasing in proportion.

The error is being atoned for in the later enterprises. The stately Avenida de Mayo, which runs from the Plaza containing the Cathedral and Government House to the new Chambers of Congress which are building is an instance of this. With its spacious roadway and its broad sidewalks lined with plane trees, it is as imposing a thoroughfare as can be imagined. The magnificent Avenida Alvear, too, which leads from the main city to Palermo Park, is in some respects still more striking. The mansions which flank it are interspersed by gardens and plazas, and the broad avenue gains by the wealth of verdure and flowers. The Calle Florida, on the other hand, which is essentially the fashionable street of the central town, is lamentably narrow, although its buildings are as fine as could be desired.

Buenos Aires is bountifully provided with parks and plazas. The latter are usually laid out in a very tasteful manner, and the shade of the palms and other trees is much appreciated, more especially by the Neapolitan section of the population. The newly-made gardens of the Parque Cristobal Colon which line the docks present an instance of how a large plot of what was nothing more than waste land can be turned into an entirely charming spot. In the matter of these open spaces the city fathers are decidedly to be congratulated upon the taste they have displayed in their successful efforts at embellishment.

But the chief pride of Buenos Aires is centred in

Palermo Park. This comprises an area of nearly a thousand acres. Situated at half-an-hour's drive from the town, it is here that the fashionable Porteños are wont to promenade of an afternoon. The large expanse of park is laid out with trees of all kinds, and there are numerous artificial lakes. It is intersected by broad drives, the most notable of which is the palm avenue. When these are filled with moving carriages and the side-walks crowded with pedestrians, Palermo constitutes perhaps one of the most brilliant spectacles in Buenos Aires. Here are the Zoological Gardens which for many years contained nothing beyond a few decaying samples of animal life. They are now, however, in common with all else, being modernised, and are well worth a visit. Here, too, are the race-courses of the Jockey Club and the Sociedad Hipica. Cattle shows are held periodically within the Park, while just without its boundaries are situated the Botanical Gardens.

In many of the older houses in the less frequented streets of Buenos Aires the courtyard or patio that was once typical may still be seen. The glimpse of the small expanse of foliage and blossoms set within the masonry is pleasant and refreshing in the extreme. But, alas, the days of the patio are on the wane so far as Argentina's capital is concerned. The increased value of space forbids the luxury now. There is no further need, moreover, for that graceful network of bars which covers the large windows of the old-fashioned, one-storeyed houses. The low buildings themselves are doomed. Houses in the city are rising in height more and more, and the well of

the lift is wont to occupy the space that once knew the patio.

The Central Produce Market lies at some distance from the central portion of the town. It is a vast building of red brick, situated on the bank of the Riachuelo, a small stream whose waters are wont to be all but hidden by the hulls and forest of masts of innumerable small sailing vessels that rest at anchor there. As regards produce, it is the central point of Argentina, drawing to itself as it does the pastoral fruits of thousands of square miles. The building is a Titan of its order, containing three floors of enormous area. The ground one of these is devoted to hides, while in the upper premises the wool is stored. The railway system penetrates the structure itself, and the space beneath is intersected by railway lines. At intervals above these there are openings in the floors that much resemble the hold of a vessel. It is at these points that the laden trains halt. The corrugated iron roofs are swung from the cars, and their contents hoisted by hydraulic cranes to whichever floor is desired.

Below, one may see the dull, compact masses of the hides; but it is the sight of the wool which attracts the greatest attention. Here are fleeces in heaps, in squares, and in huge blunted pyramids. One has but to follow the windings of the place to pass through miles of the wool on end—the light fleece of the Lincoln contrasting with the darker-hued crossbred, while the yet more sombre merino stands out in the mounds at intervals. The wool that lies here has been shorn from millions upon millions of sheep.

The spot resounds to the noises of orderly bustle. Mingled with the clanking of the cranes, comes the incessant rattle of wool laden trollies. They are propelled by men who seem permeated with the busy spirit of the place, for these move at a run more often than at a walk. Here and there are dealers and experts in long white overcoats who value, and buy, and sell. With true Argentine love of comfort a restaurant is installed within the building itself.

In the neighbourhood are numerous private warehouses. Here again are mountains of fleeces that rear themselves near by the wool presses. There are men who fill small hand-carts from the great pile, and run with them to the press. These latter machines would seem to possess an all but human ingenuity. They demand to be fully fed ere they are prepared to commence their arduous process of digestion. When this is effected comes the clank of the hydraulic press while the anguished wool groans and squeaks aloud in protest. One may catch a glimpse of it as it is crushed ever more closely together. Then, with the turning of a lever, the front of the machine flies open. The wool bale, compact and solid, is exposed with its gunny covering hanging over it; but the machine has not finished yet. It is fed again—with straight narrow slips of iron sheathes this time. These it swallows, twists, and fastens, and in another moment the wool-bale is ready for export, "gunnied and hooped."

The Buenos Airen equivalent to our own "East End" is to be found in the "Boca," a district that contains the dock labourers and the majority of the

more or less impoverished inhabitants. In bygone days the place possessed a sinister reputation. The quarter was perfectly lawless then, a hot-bed of crime and criminals. There are many tales told of the spot —of bloodhounds trained to pull riders from their horses, and the like. The list of crimes of violence here even in these days of law and order is no light one, as the police know to their cost.

There is little evidence of actual squalor, even in this least favoured quarter. For the matter of that, the modern and comparatively imposing nature of the buildings serve as a blind to many an eyesore. The few specimens, moreover, of the older type of mean houses are picturesque for all their discomfort. One may yet see upon the outskirts erections with walls that flame in green, red, and blue with true Oriental gorgeousness.

The growth of the Docks presents one of those instances which are wont to be given of the astonishing development of Buenos Aires. It was but fifteen years ago that a passenger, upon the arrival of his vessel before the town, found himself confronted by the unalluring foreground of a marshy strip of beach. He left the vessel in a small boat and was rowed alongside a cart which had entered the water in readiness. Into this he was bundled in company with his baggage, and then, in humble fashion, with many jerks and creaks, he was driven ashore. Now the vessels enter one of the numerous gates of the vast dock system, and are faced by row upon row of massive wharves, at the back of which spreads a network of railway lines, while in the background are

the public gardens with their flowering trees and statuary.

For mile after mile these docks stretch their length, crammed to overflowing with large steamers; and, without, lying anchored in the river, awaiting their turn for a berth, are many more. For this giant enterprise, these miles of brick and stone, flanked by towering grain elevators, and with powerful cranes as thick as peas to their front, already fail entirely to satisfy present needs. Buenos Aires will soon be forced to expand once more and to take a yet larger bite at that expensive fruit which provides for the future.

The paving of the central portion of the town leaves nothing to be desired. It is true that in the less important thoroughfares one may occasionally trip over a loose block of stone that the repairers have omitted to clear away; but in the fashionable streets such need not be looked for. Indeed, the surfaces of these latter compare favourably with those of London. On the extreme outskirts of the city the transition from art to nature is strikingly abrupt. At the end of the paved roads the earth of the camp, scored and uneven, furrowed in places to the depth of a foot and more, lies ready to try the springs of the traveller's carriage.

For such beauty as it possesses Buenos Aires has little cause to thank nature. The land upon which it is built as well as that which surrounds it is flat to a degree. The only slope in the city which is the least noticeable is that which extends from the Paseo de Julio towards the docks. Here one may meet with a

rather abrupt drop of twenty or thirty feet. The sole interest that it possesses lies in the fact of its being unique.

The glimpses of the La Plata River which are to be obtained at the end of those streets which lead towards it are curious in the extreme. Owing to the low level of the ground, the watery expanse stands out across these in a manner that suggests a mud-coloured wall. Indeed, at first it is difficult to imagine that this yellow-brown surface represents water at all. It is not until the steamers' hulls and the white sails are marked upon it that one is convinced that the brown waste that has such a look of earth stands for the great La Plata River.

So far as the climate is concerned, the city would seem to have justly earned its nomenclature of "Buenos Aires." In the old days the imperfect sanitary system undoubtedly militated strongly against the natural healthfulness of the spot. As it is, the death-rate testifies to the excellence of the present conditions. In 1904 this had diminished to the strikingly low point of 14.6 per 1,000 inhabitants. There are few cities in Europe which can boast such a satisfactory record as this.

CHAPTER V.

BUENOS AIRES.

Ways and Means in the Capital—Restaurant Life—Theatres—The Teatro Apolo—Other Entertainments—Cafés and their Management—A City of Complacent Luxury—Clubs—Hotels—Hurlingham—A Paradise of Sport—The Game of Pelota—Suburbs—The Tigre River.

The Capital of Argentina is in no sense a niggardly city. The tastes of its private inhabitants are wont to rival those of its municipality. Of late years money has been made here with comparative lightheartedness, and the attractions which offer themselves to absorb the overflow are numerous. It is a town of luxuries and an international playground where each countryman may find a corner in which to amuse himself after his native manner. But the cost of the many attractions that it provides has been increasing steadily with the size of the place. Here the paper dollar (1/10d.) stands for the equivalent of a shilling. The purchasing power, moreover, of this latter coin in London considerably exceeds that of its equivalent in Argentina. Nevertheless, owing to a plentiful supply of these paper dollars, the cost of living seems a matter of comparative indifference to the majority of the townsmen.

One may judge of the life of a city to a great extent by the condition of its restaurants. As may be expected, these are here as cosmopolitan as the rest of the attributes of the place. One may partake of

almost every European dish—to say nothing of the native ones—within the length of a single street. The Restaurant Charpentier, the "Sportsman," and Monsch's Restaurant are amongst the most popular of the better class establishments. The first possesses a really brilliant orchestra; the second goes one better as, in addition to this, it provides its patrons with a cinematograph entertainment during meals. The third makes a speciality of English dishes—it is a spot where a demand for a chop or steak will be greeted with a look of acute understanding.

I have given a prominent place to Restaurants for the reason that in Buenos Aires an infinite amount of attention is devoted to the inner man. If one can measure a restaurateur's joy by the extent of his custom, there are many meal-mongers here who must stand within the gates of an earthly heaven. To obtain a seat at certain hours at a popular establishment of the kind frequently necessitates a deal of patient waiting; for the Argentine—and the transplanted Englishman as well—is wont to linger over his meal in an appreciative fashion. As a matter of fact, there is wont to be a good deal upon which to dwell. The dejeuner at mid-day which follows the early morning coffee is a function of no little importance. It is usual to commence this with "Fiambre," a dish that consists of slices of cold chicken, tongue, turkey, and other meats. When these, together with Russian salad, have been disposed of, one is apt to be left in doubt as to whether the meal has just begun or ended; but the appearance of hors d'œuvres, soup, fish, and the rest of the

A NORTHERN RANCHO.

SCENE AT A NORTHERN STATION,

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courses speedily dissipates all uncertainty. Dinner—at the English hour—is wont to be a repetition of breakfast, with several courses added.

After dinner, one passes naturally to the theatres. These, as a matter of fact—with the exception of one—call for no special remark. "Stars" make their occasional appearance at the opera much as they do elsewhere, and the plays in the other houses are upon a par with those in other large cities. But there is the one exception—and this is a theatre that for "local colour" is unique so far as Buenos Aires is concerned. Once within its doors, one is removed from the outer atmosphere of cosmopolitanism and modernity. In its place is the life of Argentina pure and simple, that older life which is already passing away, and which in any case is invisible to those who judge Argentina from a chance visit to its Capital.

The Teatro Apolo deals solely in plays that are Argentine. Conceived by Argentines, they affect the inner life of the Republic. Amongst others are farces which parody the social and political life of the country. But the plays which are best worth seeing are those which picture Camp life—its humours, and—this latter is specialised—its tragedies. The Teatro Apolo, knowing its public, doles out these with no unsparing hand. They are produced, moreover, in a surprisingly able manner.

A favourite play here which, for all its melodrama, is not a little impressive, is "La Piedra de Escandolo"—the stone of scandal. The scene is laid in a small estancia in a lonely part of the Camp. The aged owner resides upon the spot in the midst of his

family. The latter consists of a son and two daughters, the elder of which is torn by an insane jealousy of her more beautiful sister Rosa. With this exception, the family are honest, God-fearing folk, such as are to be met with in the Camp as well as elsewhere. The love element is introduced by the Capataz (bailiff), a simple-minded farmer who adores the daughter Rosa, but is restrained from a declaration by his appreciation of the social gap that lies between him and his adored. A knife scene—by no means untrue to life—between the Capataz and a drunken "peon" serves to demonstrate the former's gallantry.

Presently the canker of tragedy swells. The machinations of the jealous sister reveal a sinister under-current in the family existence. Rosa, it appears, is besmirched. Innocent at heart, her ruin was effected by the foulest treachery, but the stain remains, nevertheless. The tragedy develops to the accompaniment of embittered scenes between the two sisters. The jealous one of the pair, it appears, is in love with a man who, for his part, loves Rosa. Unwilling to believe that the latter does not reciprocate this undesired affection, the elder sister taunts her cruelly, though the brother does his utmost to protect the wronged one from the infuriated tongue that lashes her.

At length the elder sister, beside herself, in the presence of the family, proclaims Rosa's shame to the man she loves. A situation here, with a vengeance! It is her last vile act—upon the stage. For shortly after this she is swept away into oblivion as

the wife of the weak and thunderstruck man she desired. Then comes a hint of the climax. It is discovered at the eleventh hour that there is a plot afoot. Rosa's seducer, hounded away, has boldly planned her abduction by force. He is to come in the night of the very day upon which the discovery is made. The watch dogs already lie poisoned without, and it dawns upon brother and sister that there is not a moment to spare. Rosa declares that she will destroy herself rather than fall a second time into the clutches of the prowling wretch.

The last scene reveals the interior of the Estancia house by night. The tottering old father, knowing nothing of what impends, has retired to his rest. Brother and sister are bracing themselves for their watch for the thief in the night. The brother, as Rosa crouches beside him, swears to defend her to the last. He leaves her to fetch his rifle, and at that moment the young Capataz enters. Seeing her, doubly beautiful in her grief, his passion overcomes his prudence, and he begs her to be his wife. To his unutterable joy he finds that his passion has been returned; but the next moment his high hopes are stricken to the ground. Rosa tells him all. Betrayed, she can be no wife of his—dishonoured, she can mother the children of no honest man. The anguish of the Capataz is cut short by the entry of the brother with a loaded rifle. Ere he has had time to speak a low whistle sounds from without. The brother, flinging open the window, crouches down. His weapon is poised; he is about to fire, when the Capataz, exclaiming that the deed shall be his who

has nothing on earth to gain or lose, snatches the rifle from his hands. The next second, brushing aside the agonised Rosa, he has fired. The curtain falls as, knife in hand, he leaps through the window to complete his vengeance.

The play, of course, is melodramatic in the extreme. Contrasted with Northern ideas, moreover, it contains a superabundance of declamation. Fine sentiments come as fast as flakes in a snowstorm—but then they do that from an Argentine off the stage as well as on it. When one hears the rolling torrents of sonorous Argentine-Spanish, when the restraint is noticed with which the lurid scenes are acted, and when one knows, moreover, that the plot is by no means as improbable there as it would be on this side of the water, the hypercritical themselves can find little to jeer at. With the Camp so near at hand, and with so many of its denizens in the ranks of the audience, the career of impossible situations would be short. To see the Camp—in Buenos Aires—go to the Teatro Apolo. But it is well to see the life at first hand in addition.

The most prominent artists at this theatre are five brothers, the Señores Podesta. Of these Señor Pablo Podesta is the chief star. He is wont to leap from melodrama to burlesque at the shortest intervals. This versatility is characteristic of the company. Señorita Lea Conti is wont to assume the leading feminine roles, and is entirely charming as an actress. The humour of the farces is occasionally a little broad. The Teatro Apolo, when in the mood, tickles with no diffident hand.

The enthusiasm of all concerned is undoubted. The sight of the prompter alone is worth the admission fee. From one of the open stage boxes one may watch the vivid action of this gentleman in his old-fashioned shelter to the front of the boards. He is heart and soul in the play. He reads every word; he smiles when the actors smile, and frowns when they frown. His gesticulations occur in perfect unison with theirs, and at the tragic moments his head droops low. There never was such a prompter. His little box is a theatre in itself—one from which the general audience is mercilessly excluded.

That the performances are classic of their order is testified to by the fact that the audience, though Argentine (there is not one foreigner in a hundred who knows of the place) refrains from smoking within. But during the intervals the building is deserted of almost every male soul. As a foyer the street pavement serves more efficiently than the cramped space provided. But one is little the worse for that.

Buenos Aires is not without its music halls. But the couple of these that are in existence do not represent favourable specimens of their class. A poorly engineered programme, and a comfortless and badly upholstered building are their chief characteristics. The performances cannot be said to err on the side of chastity, and the status of these halls is considerably beneath that of those in the larger European cities. In circus entertainment Buenos Aires is more fortunate. These are held at the Coliseo Argentino, a magnificent building with an

astonishing seating capacity. The performances here rival anything of the kind in other parts of the world.

Cafés abound, as may be expected. One can pass through few of the main streets without being confronted by such announcements as "English Bar," "Bierhalle," "Confiteria," "Café Parisien," and many similar legends in yet other tongues. The principal of these possess orchestras, many of which are really good. They are of all types, moreover, from the Hungarian band and the ladies orchestra down to the troupe of mandoline performers.

Considerable ingenuity in offering attractions to patrons is exhibited by the minor as well as by the more important establishments. On the very outskirts of the town, for instance, is a small café in a poor quarter. But though the place is insignificant in itself, its proprietor's ideas are large. Opposite his house of refreshment stands a blank wall, and upon this he causes cinematograph scenes to be flashed. Here, as one passes by, there rise up by the wayside the leaping pictures of humorous incident and of peculiarly bloodthirsty murder, the portrayal of which is so popular amongst the Argentine masses. The exhibition, it occurred to me, tended rather to induce customers to join the ranks of the spectators in the roadway, but, as the programme continued unaltered, the chances are that the venture proved a remunerative one.

The system of out-door cafés is all but unknown in Buenos Aires. As a matter of fact, the narrowness of the streets militates against this method of open-

air refreshment. In the broad Avenida de Mayo may be seen several collections of chairs and tables that line the pavement at various points. The populace, however, would seem to have taken to the idea only half-heartedly.

Notwithstanding the enterprise and commercial keenness which prevail in Buenos Aires, the city knows nothing of that "rush" which characterises New York, and in a far lesser degree, London. It may be said that in a land of "Mañana" such a condition of affairs was in no case to be looked for, but the days of "Mañana" are dead in the commercial quarters of Argentina's capital. At the same time it would seem that the prosperity which has so bountifully enveloped the land has left those whom it has benefited free to look about them and enjoy existence the while. Although the foreign community is essentially a business one, it is seldom that the clubs are denuded of members at any hour of the day.

Of these latter the three that are of most interest are The Jockey Club, The Club de Residentes Estranjeros, and the English Club. The Jockey Club is, in one sense, the premier of the three. Its house in the Calle Florida is of a grandeur difficult to match in the entire world of clubdom. Its staircase is justly celebrated, and the decorations and scheme of the rooms are nothing less than superb. Notwithstanding a heavy entrance fee, the actual expense of the club is less than might be imagined. In the matter of funds the Jockey Club is fortunate in its connection with the race-course at Palermo.

The benefit of the profits derived from this is experienced by the members. Excellent meals are to be obtained at surprisingly low rates, and the other incidental expenses are in proportion. It is an institution much patronised by the wealthier Argentines, who far outnumber the whole of the foreign members put together. The club has its traditions. The doffing of a coat for a game of billiards will result in the intervention of a polite official with a request to put it on again. Laxity elsewhere, if you like—but in the Jockey Club, no!

The Club de Residentes Estranjeros (Strangers' Club) is situated in the Calle Bartolomé-Mitré. The great majority of its five hundred members are British, and a pleasanter resort it would be difficult to conceive. The premises are well accommodated, the feeding and sleeping arrangements are good, and the club is blessed in the person of a secretary whose courtesy is unsurpassed. The hospitality of the establishment vies with that of the rest. One can say no more than this in a town where the quality is cultivated to an Arabian point. There is one custom which causes this pleasant place to be a little out of the ordinary run of such establishments, that of tipping the club servants and waiters.

The English Club is situated next door to the "Strangers." The membership of this club is constituted, for the most part, of "Camp men"—the owners of Estancias and the like who visit the capital periodically. Its premises are a little smaller than those of its neighbour, and there is no accommodation for meals in the building, which, in view of its large

membership and the many attractions which the place has to offer is perhaps rather a pity. The English Club is a vigorous institution, and perhaps one of the worst places to stagnate in that Buenos Aires knows. One can only hope that it may long remain so.

In the suburb of Lomas is a second English Club, the sole institution of its kind that lies without the radius of Central Buenos Aires. It is housed in an attractive little building that has the advantage of a Patio in its midst. The number of its members amounts to almost a hundred. The English residents of Lomas take not a little pride in their club, and with reason, for there are few that have spent a day there that have regretted it.

Although Buenos Aires possesses many hotels, the number of the better establishments is somewhat small in proportion to the size of the town. The majority are expensive, but there are none which would rank as positively first-class in a large European capital. There are, however, two or three in construction which bid fair to bring up the average somewhat. At the present moment it must be admitted that the city is poorly served in this respect. The chief of the existing hotels are the Grand, the Phœnix, and the Royal.

CHAPTER VI.

BUENOS AIRES.

Hurlingham—A Paradise of Sport—The game of Pelota—Suburbs—The Tigre River.

At the end of a thirty-five minutes train journey from Buenos Aires lies Hurlingham. Nothing is simpler for the stranger who has an entrée to the place than to proceed there. He has but to drive to the Retiro railway terminus and to demand a ticket. But if he mentions his destination as Hurlingham, his troubles are likely to begin, for he will in all probability be met by a stare of noncomprehension on the part of the booking clerk. If he be wise, he will search for the aid of a chance countryman without further ado. He will then return—to demand a ticket for "Hooleenham." And he will get it. The translation is a necessary concession to Argentine phonetics.

But, once within the grounds, Hooleenham is conjured back to Hurlingham again with pleasant abruptness. The Hurlingham Club stands as a monument to the sporting enterprise of the British in Argentina. It is difficult to conceive a more business-like fashion than that in which its numerous acres are laid out. As one enters, a race-course is one of the first objects which greets the sight. Within its circle stretches an extensive cricket ground with a Pavilion of its own. To the left of this is the Polo

ground with its stand of raised benches. To the front of all lies the club-house itself. It is an extensive building with dining, smoking, and card rooms amongst many others, while a number of bedrooms are set aside for the members. In the neighbourhood of this are the racquet and lawn-tennis courts, swimming baths, and a large building where the active members may change their apparel and take their "tub."

The whole is most tastefully and efficiently laid out. The race-course and cricket ground are well backed up by trees, and there are shaded walks in the neighbourhood of the clubhouse. The place is a paradise of sport. It is no uncommon thing to witness a cricket match, several sets of Lawn Tennis, and a game of Polo in full swing at the same moment. Indeed, the atmosphere of Hurlingham is such that it is difficult to believe that, once without its boundaries, lies not England but Argentina.

There was a time when the Spanish game of Pelota bade fair to emerge from its comparatively neglected status and to become one of the chief of Argentina's recreations. The game itself possesses much in common with that of racquets. The court in which it is played is similar, but there is a great distinction between the two in the methods of handling the ball. In Pelota the racquet is dispensed with in favour of a hollow contrivance of cane, which is attached to the right arm, and which extends for some distance beyond the hand. It is in this that the ball is caught, and by means of this, slung again with terrific force.

As a matter of fact, the ancient game of Pelota is

a magnificent one that called for every success that could attend it. But its reign of acute popularity was lamentably short in Buenos Aires. The fault lay, not with the ethics of the game, but with the methods of the players. Indeed, the downfall of the game was indirectly due to that Argentine enthusiasm which, unsated by local talent, insisted on the importation of the crack Spanish players. In these days the Argentine is seldom satisfied with anything but the best, of whatever kind it may be.

The crack Spanish players came, saw, and, as might have been expected, conquered the local exponents of the game with ease. In the meanwhile the magnitude of the stakes they won, and the far greater amounts which they saw were involved by the private wagers of the Argentines amongst themselves had opened their eyes. They readily consented to remain for a while longer, and to enter into rivalry with each other. At the same time they entered into the spirit of Argentine wagering, and the bets which they made with their hosts upon the results of the games were weighty. So far as these latter were concerned, the matches were well worth the watching, but it began to be whispered that they were worth more to the competitors than that, and the prize-money besides. Whether the Spanish professionals had contracted a spirit of enterprise from the newer nation or not, the Argentines found their interest in the game too costly a one. The players returned to their native land, and the science of Pelota has languished ever since.

In addition to its outlying residential quarters of

A CAMP RACE MEETING.

A CAMP RACE MEETING.

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Flores, Belgrano and Palermo, Buenos Aires possesses several remoter suburbs such as Lomas, Temperley and San Martin. Though all of these are pleasant places, containing a number of fine "quintas," in the matter of natural beauty there is little to choose between the nearer and the further resorts. The universal plain permits no serious display of individuality, generally speaking, even in the more rural spots. There is one exception to this, however, and that lies in the district of the Tigre.

The River Tigre is the Thames of Argentina. The former represents to Buenos Aires that which the latter does to London. But the popularity of the Argentine river, far from remaining stationary or even waning, is growing each year by leaps and bounds. The Porteños (Buenos Airens) are wont to speak of "going on the Tigre," which latter is a simple, if inaccurate, method of referring to an entire network of streams of which the Lujan is the most important, and the Tigre itself one of the most insignificant.

A little more than thirty years ago, the setting of these rivers differed widely from that which they now know. The banks then were comparatively bare and crude, permitting monotonous glimpses of the dead-level country about. The plains are now chequered by innumerable plantations of trees, while the river banks are fringed by a dense curtain of vegetation. Groves of eucalyptus, poplar, and willow jog branches with closely set peach and nectarine orchards. Imposing creeper-clad houses, large hotels, and trim refreshment gardens are dotted

thickly along the river side. Beyond these, there are rowing and sailing club-houses, and, in fact, every attribute of a popular resort of the kind. In any other land such a transformation would have been held forth as a wonder to the world. But Argentine growths can all but vie with the celebrated beanstalk of Jack. The country has become hardened to the sight of similar developments until, in the end, it has grown to look upon them as natural and to be expected. It is true that it is as far back as the year 1872 that some energetic watermen, impressed by the possibilities of the spot, founded there a boating club. Others followed, and the popularity of these streams grew steadily among river men. Nevertheless, it was not until recent years that Buenos Aires in all its cosmopolitan entirety "discovered" the Tigre. But the eyes of the Argentines and of the rest once opened, they flung themselves upon its waters with all their wonted enthusiasm. Ere this one might lie asleep in mid-stream for hours without danger of a bump. Now it is necessary to keep an eye well skinned if one would hope to clear the crowd of motor launches. A regatta day will see the course upon the Lujan fringed deep in boats, and upon such an occasion the Retiro Station in Buenos Aires—well, it is not Paddington upon a Henley morning, but the scene is gaining greatly in resemblance each year, nevertheless.

There are two ways of "doing" the Tigre. It offers the alternatives of a "society" lounge or of a sterner trip on its more remote waters. In the former case one may glide slowly to and fro upon the

favoured stretch of the regatta course. Here the procession of passing craft is never-ending. There are launches, punts, and skiffs filled with cosmopolitan parties, among which the graceful figures of Argentine girls are to be distinguished. For to these latter the manœuvring of a rudder is no longer a secret; they have learned to scull, moreover, thanks to the Tigre. And, as the Argentine is loth to be one whit behind his neighbours, it is in Thames-built boats of mahogany that they glide up and down stream. At times one may hear the notes of the guitar, which I have heard termed a Spanish *makeshift* for our banjo! One may spend a pleasant enough afternoon thus, floating alongside the broad colour splashes of the oleander and magnolia blossoms upon the banks. In the evening those who would dine in a manner worthy of the past may choose the large hotel, whose tables, overflowing from the dining-room, spread themselves out upon the terrace by the river side. If there be moonlight, the effect here is little short of fairy-like. The moon's lane of light is intersected by the reflections of the lamps upon the banks, while here and there the twinkling point that denotes a launch darts in and out of the shadows. The craft themselves loom up one after the other to deposit fresh guests at the landing-stage, until each table at the terrace is occupied by diners in boating flannels or in evening dress. When one has added to all this the perfume of many flowers, the strains of a string band, and the darting glow of the fireflies, tempered by an occasional mosquito, the picture of a Tigre dinner may be taken as complete.

The excursions into the remoter waters are adventurous by comparison. For these one must go beyond the more cultivated districts to where the large crimson blossom of the ceibo tree, the honeysuckle, and the swamp flowers bloom unaided. One may wind in and out of the maze of streams, in continual wonder as to what the next bend will reveal. There are broad streets of water, lanes, narrow passages, and blind alleys of it. One might follow as direct a course as possible and emerge upon the broad bosom of the distant Parana, or one might pursue the windings for weeks without once doubling upon a previous track. Here one may meet the heavy native boats, laden with willow timber and fruit. If one desires refreshment cheaply, there is no better plan than to follow these latter. The glut of fruit is such that overloading is general, and it is seldom that one of these craft does not leave a bobbing trail of peaches, pears, and apples in its wake. The place is something of a rural Venice, for it is only by means of these waterways that the fruit growers upon the islands are enabled to visit each other or to go abroad to any extent at all. Thus their boats are continually emerging from and disappearing into the bye-ways, whose narrow openings amid the verdure have passed all but unnoticed.

If, when bound for the station at the close of the day, the Tigre devotee has had his fill of the river, he may avail himself of the tramcar which waits without the hotel, in place of floating down the stream. It is an old-fashioned car, strictly rural, and horse-drawn. It moves through the dim light at an easy pace to

DRIVING IN HORSES.

SCENE AT A CAMP RACE MEETING.

A HALT ON A CAMP JOURNEY.

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the music of the cow-horn through which the driver blows at intervals. The notes are in a plaintive minor, a blend of bagpipes and flute. They serve their purpose, nevertheless, for through the verdure of the quintas comes the sound of farewells, and the sight of white-garmented forms that hasten towards the tramlines. By the time the vehicle has reached the station its complement is wont to be a full one, with, perhaps, a fringe of men in addition, hanging upon the long step at each side. And, once within the train, the coaches have to swing onwards for less than an hour ere they have entered within the mightily beating heart of Buenos Aires once more.

CHAPTER VII.

BUENOS AIRES.

Commerce and its Distribution—Banks and Insurance Companies—Tramway and other enterprises—Mistakes of British Manufacturers—The Birmingham Exhibition—Retail Trade—The Attractions of Boot-Blacking Shops—Lotteries—A Typical Scene—The Aftermath of Good Fortune.

The time is not so remote when the wholesale commerce of Buenos Aires was almost entirely in the hands of the English. Perhaps, in view of the great growth of the country, it would have been unreasonable to expect this state of affairs to continue. In any case the unfortunate fact remains that it has not. It was unavoidable, of course, where commercial enterprises have risen up in tens for each former unit, that business channels should have become more widely distributed. At the same time it must be admitted that British commercial power, even though it has increased, has by no means kept pace with the growth of that of other nations.

Banking Institutions are naturally represented by all countries. Loan Societies are principally English and Belgian. The railways are still—so far as the important lines are concerned—in English hands. From the thoroughly excellent way in which they are managed, moreover, it is likely that they will long remain there. As regards the Tramway Companies, German capital has stepped in here, and the control of these is shared between the latter and the English.

Teutonic influence in the matter, however, is, to all appearance, gaining ground. The important system of electric lighting and electrical engineering in general has passed almost entirely into the domain of the Germans. In the matter of such monumental enterprise, as it may be termed, the French have taken a hand in several harbour development and dredging schemes.

The proportion of British Insurance Companies is large. There is an Argentine law relating to these which is of some interest. Every foreign Company of this kind that has offices and carries on business in Argentina is obliged to invest a certain amount of capital, in proportion to its importance, in the country. This legislation has for its object the protection of the native insurers' interests. The safeguard is undoubtedly considerable, and, in view of recent events in this country, not so superfluous as might be imagined. It is for this reason that the Insurance Companies own so large an extent of house property in Buenos Aires, and of land in its outskirts.

The charge of ultra-conservatism has been brought against British Manufacturers and Merchants in all parts of the world with increasing frequency of late. It is said of them that they fail to study new developments or changed requirements in those markets to which they once shipped their goods freely. Something of the kind is visible in Argentina. The British residents of Buenos Aires are, naturally enough, fighting on even terms with their competitors, and with success. The case is frequently

otherwise with the manufacturer who directs operations from the old country. Should the Argentine demand a peculiar shape of knife or saddle, the manufacturer is apt to retort—not quite in so many words—that what is good enough for him at home should satisfy South America still more fully. The only conceivable consequence has resulted; the Argentine has "gone elsewhere." It must be admitted that, on the part of many, sheer ignorance rather than pig-headedness has been responsible for this. A couple of years ago, for instance, an exhibition of Birmingham products was held in Buenos Aires. The affair was not a particularly great or imposing one, it is true, but the Argentines were interested, and attended in considerable numbers. The result was curious. The Argentine had gone to the spot with a view of inspecting those solid, sterling specimens of manufacture on which England prides herself. Instead of which they saw, to their astonishment, a motley collection of tawdry and comparatively worthless objects. Of guns, for instance, there might have been seen an array of the order known as "keepers' guns," and the rest of the exhibits were on a par with this. Now, as has been explained, the only thing that is good enough for the modern Argentine is the best of its kind. For a brace of guns in which he could take pride he would prefer to pay three figures rather than give three for articles of only moderate excellence. To put the matter mildly, the specimens offered him were the result of a lamentable error of judgment. He shrugged his shoulders, and went away—and an opportunity that

might have benefited an English industry ended by working it considerable direct harm.

The retail trade of the city is largely in the hands of the Basques, who form a considerable portion of the population of Buenos Aires. The more important shops, however, are owned by representatives of all nationalities, and it is usual for several languages to be spoken in these. There is a considerable Turkish quarter, which trades a little in the town itself, but whose commercial dealings are principally effected by means of pedling in the camp.

The Neapolitan, amongst his other enterprises, has taken beneath his special protection an industry that is here elaborated to a far greater extent than in any European city—that of shoe-blacking. At home one regards the red-coated "shiner" at street corners with something akin to pity. His profession is a road to nowhere, and a thorny one at that. In Argentina the shoe-black is a person of some consideration and importance, with a field of operations to match. This is usually a large, open-fronted shop with a scheme of decoration as daring as even the vivid taste of the Neapolitan can make it. Upon either side of the space within is a raised bench with a foot-rest attached that somewhat resembles an elongated dentist's chair. This, bringing the customer's feet to the height of the shoe-black's middle, spares him the pain of kneeling.

Many of these establishments are extremely flourishing concerns, and the goodwill of not a few is estimated a valuable asset. The Argentine domestic, in common with those of the majority of

newer countries, possesses a strong dislike to include boot-polishing among his menial duties. As a profession, however, the art would seem to gain immensely in dignity. Thus it is that one may see its temples crowded with customers, while a double line of the Neapolitans in between ply their brushes with ardour.

The business is carried on with verve and éclat. At the back of the place is a vast-mouthed gramophone that bellows out its songs and orchestral music in ceaseless volleys of sound. At the door is a man, with a throat almost as brazen as that of the instrument, whose vociferations at the slacker moments vie with the purely mechanical strains. The scene strongly suggests a corner in an English country fair. In all such details the establishments are as alike as peas. It must be admitted that, thanks perhaps to this stimulating if somewhat crude atmosphere, boots and shoes are wont to become very shiny indeed.

South America in general is a continent of lotteries. The spirit of chance so favoured by the Latin of Western Europe has lost nothing by its transmission oversea. It is perhaps natural that the workings of these should be most of all evident in Buenos Aires, the largest city of the South. Here, their ramifications extend to the most unexpected spots. The hairdressers' shops, for instance, represent minor hotbeds of the system in the neighbourhood of Christmas time. At this period one can enter no shop of the kind without suffering the exhibition of a number of objects which are about to be raffled—for the benefit

of the employés. Why the hair-dressers in particular should have arrogated this privilege to themselves is not quite clear. They have succeeded, however, in promoting such ventures into a regular custom. As a rule the prizes are worthless and the tickets expensive, but it is seldom that they meet with a refusal to purchase one.

But such as these are the merest drops in the Argentine ocean of chances. The national lotteries hold out as an inducement prizes that represent to the winners of more important stakes not only comfort but affluence for the remainder of their lives. The number of these is very great. Indeed, there is a drawing almost every day. There are no street match-sellers in Buenos Aires. Their place is taken by the hawkers who offer lottery numbers for sale. In addition there are a considerable number of shopkeepers who act as agents for the sale of these. They receive a commission for their pains, and make the most of the luck which their particular customers have enjoyed. Their system of advertising is a little quaint. One may see outside one of these ticket depots a huge placard upon which runs a legend of this order: "It was at this establishment that the number which gained ten thousand dollars in such and such a lottery was sold." The thing is a guarantee of that of which the shop is capable. If it has effected this in the past, why not again in the future? Why not? The number of persons who emphasise this question and buy the scrip-like pieces of paper is astonishingly large.

The method of speculation is somewhat cunningly

arranged. It entraps the shallow as well as the deep pocket. There is no need to purchase a ticket in its entirety. These are printed in sections, so that one may invest in a tenth, a quarter, or the whole at will. The most important lottery of all is that drawn at Christmas time, which is known as the "Grande." The chief prize in this amounts to one million dollars —roughly, ninety thousand pounds—a very pretty plum indeed! Beyond this, as is the case in every venture of the kind, there are a number of consolation prizes. Thus, failing to secure the big stake, the ticket-holder may be comforted by lesser amounts which range from a few dollars to a good many thousands.

The drawing of these lotteries is an instructive if somewhat pathetic sight. The ceremony is held in a spacious and lofty hall. Within it are rows of benches filled to overflowing with interested spectators. The crowd is composed of elements other than those which dot the enclosure of Palermo race-course, or fill the carriages in the Calle Florida. These latter are interested almost to a man, it is true, but a careless glance at the evening paper suffices to appease their concern. Those who sit here, strained and erect, are the wearers of dingy clothes, of neck-cloths in place of collars, and of worn felt hats. To them the top prizes mean a new life of sunshine for an old one of shadow, presents from Heaven itself, as many will tell you. The purchase of a ticket has been won here at the cost of many a comfort; but they must have it by fair means or foul. For does it not permit them to sit at the very walls of Paradise itself,

and might not one of the rare openings of that very narrow gate let them through as well as another?

At the further end of the hall are two shining glass globes of uneven size, bound in brass. Set on high so that all may see them, they revolve within the glass walls of a transparent prison. They are filled with tiny balls, with numbers marked upon them. Each of those in the larger globe represents the figures upon a ticket. The contents of the other, far smaller in circumference, make the charmed complement of the whole. Each ball here is precious—a prize with its value stamped clearly upon it. Ten thousand, or it may be one hundred thousand dollars upon an object not so very much larger than a doctor's pill! Truly, a gilded one!

From one side of the glass prison comes the subdued clanking of machinery. The engine is the emblem of strict justice in chance; to its soulless force alone the globes revolve. The more faulty human hand is entrusted with the engineering of the machine, and nothing beyond. At each revolution of the globes there sounds a sharp click. The opening of a catch has released one of the balls from its cage, to speed through a tube which runs downwards and outwards through the glass wall of the sanctum.

At the spot where either ball emerges into the outer room stands a boy, neatly dressed in light holland, and with carefully brushed hair. In addition to the pair on duty are a dozen or so of the same age who, seated upon a bench near by, await their turns for active service. They are lads from the national schools whose services have been borrowed for the

occasion. The working of the lottery is now in full swing. One can hear the rattling of the little ball as it comes rolling down, to rest in a cup by the side of the boy on the left. Holding it before his eyes, he calls the number. Twelve thousand five hundred and seventy-five! A second later a pellet from the smaller globe is in his colleague's hand. One thousand dollars! Number twelve thousand five hundred and seventy-five has won a thousand dollars. Not so bad! One is a little inclined to speculate as to the identity of the winner whose personality is obscured behind this array of figures. An Italian emigrant whom the knowledge will render delirious for a while, or an Argentine Magnate who will greet the news with the faintest of shrugs—one cannot tell.

By some quaint law of irony the atmosphere of the hall would seem almost akin to that of a church. The intense hush is broken only by the rhythmic, almost musical throbbing of the engine, the periodical sounds of the ball, and the pure, treble calls of the boys. These latter have a strange look of choristers. They are very serious, very much in earnest, and the duet between each pair is full-throated and sonorous. But the sacred associations cease abruptly with those which concern the ear. The managing officials at their desks, with the air of Venezuelan Prime Ministers, the helmeted policemen who motion the loiterers on towards the benches, and the countenances of the audience—all these are, to say the least of it, mundane.

If there be evidence of tragedy here, it is not a tithe of that which the glass globes and the balls

represent. For every man upon the benches there are a hundred speculators elsewhere, dotted over the land from Patagonia to the Northern Chaco. But these here are upon the spot, to watch the course of their good or ill fortune as it is served out to them fresh from the machine. There is straining and anxiety here. Every shouted number that is the property of another diminishes the prize heap in so relentless a fashion! A ticket is dragged from a pocket by trembling fingers. The figures, three sevens and two fours, are lucky. Its owner could swear to that! But, notwithstanding the premonition, nothing has happened yet. Confidence is changing to painful uncertainty.

Now a look of angry impatience has darkened the anxious faces. A fresh pair of boys have come forward as allies to the machine, and one of them has failed it. It may be that the rows of staring white faces told their tale too plainly to a lad more sensitive than the rest. His lips have opened, but he can force no sound from them. At the third attempt the officials send him, crestfallen, from the spot. A substitute is in his place, and the voices ring out clearly once again.

A minute later one of the audience has risen, his features dazed by half incredulous joy. He scans his ticket twice—a dozen times. There is no disillusion. Ten thousand dollars have come his way. He makes his exit from the place, conscious of little else but the ticket which he clutches with nervous force in his hand. The rest sit on. But that is the only ray of fortune's sunshine so far as that gathering

is concerned. The prize balls scarcely cover the bottom of the globe now; its members sit on, nevertheless. Then, the last of the clicks has sounded; the smaller globe is empty. Their numbers lie amongst the great heap that the other still holds—a small mountain of dead hopes. It is not until then that they go—cut into the street.

One hears much of the harm which these lotteries work, and, doubtless, there is little exaggeration in such statements. The moral of the proceedings is too obvious to be dwelt on here. To say nothing of money squandered on the unprofitable tickets, there are many instances related of the results of an overwhelming stroke of luck. A couple of Basques, for instance, who had worked hard for years at a somewhat precarious dairy business had the fortune to win one of the more important prizes. The charm of the news proved altogether too heating for their southern souls. A wild sensation of revolt against their former trade possessed them. In the course of their orgies they bethought themselves of their stock in trade, their cows. Turning these loose into the streets of the town, they sent them scampering along the thoroughfares—a free gift to anyone who would take the trouble to secure them. A little later they departed in affluence to their native land. Nevertheless, in their peculiarly exalted condition it is unlikely that the money served them long.

That this story is true there can be little doubt. It is told on so many hands and used so frequently to point a moral that it is difficult to believe that the facts are not as stated. The sole disconcerting point

AN ESTANCIA HOUSE.

MAR DEL PLATA—THE SANDS.

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in the matter is that three large towns, Buenos Aires, Rosario, and Mendoza, each claim this pair of Basques for their own. But many a true story has suffered from more changes in its setting than these.

An instance which illustrates the more sordid results of success itself in the lotteries is the following. Two life-long friends who had worked together in the neighbourhood of Bahia Blanca (there is no doubt as to the locality in this case) purchased out of their common funds a number which, as it happened, won the largest prize in that particular lottery. One of the overjoyed pair departed in haste to Buenos Aires in order to draw the money. He left, the owner of an unsullied reputation for honour, a man whom the other would have entrusted with his life as well as his goods. It was under these circumstances that he departed—but he never returned, though the money is drawn.

The existence of these lotteries is already doomed. It has been determined by Argentine Law that in a year or two they shall be no more. When this occurs there will, doubtless, be many who will feel that Argentine life has been deprived of one of its most pleasurable ingredients. But a sauce of this kind, however *piquante,* is better absent.

CHAPTER VIII.

BUENOS AIRES.

The Press—The Buenos Aires Police—Methods and Efficiency—System of "Point Duty"—The Force as it was—The "Cochero"—His relations with the Public—The coming "Motor"—The Tramway system—A confusing regulation—Pick-pockets upon Tram Cars.

The Argentine Press is fully up-to-date. Amongst its journals are several sheets, which, beyond the importance they possess, retain the better traditions of their calling. The most influential are the *Prensa*, the *Diario*, and the *Nacion*. These are extensive, both in size and circulation. They are well edited, possess an excellent service of news, and the tone of the literary matter is of a high order. The office of the *Prensa*, situated in the Avenida de Mayo, is one which for magnificence would make the eyes of Fleet Street water. Almost every foreign nationality is represented by a publication or two of its own, but, in justice to the Argentine Press, it must be admitted that no foreign paper can compare in importance with its chief publications. When the much smaller circulation of the foreign productions is taken into account, it becomes obvious that the matter could hardly be otherwise.

Of the weekly publications there is one, *Caras y Caretas*, which is a particularly smart little production; many clever cartoons are to be met with in its pages, and the photographs, although somewhat

in miniature, are as cosmopolitan and as interesting as any that are to be met with in a home publication. But, if *Caras y Caretas* appear small, it is rather on account of its compactness than of its real size, for the "weekly" contains no less than forty pages.

The Buenos Aires Police are deserving of a good word. The force is a very large one, numbering almost 4,000 of all ranks. There was a time when these guardians of the peace wore for head-dress the shako, with the rest of the costume to match. Their present uniform, however, is copied almost exactly from that of our own familiar and well-tried "Bobby." In summer the helmet is white, as is the case with some of our own police, and the dress is embellished by the addition of spats. With the exception of this latter detail, one might imagine that an under-sized London policeman stood before one at many a street corner in Buenos Aires. At the first glimpse, the distinction between the two is more obvious in size than in anything else. The stature of the Porteño policeman is almost invariably diminutive. Indeed, it is a curious fact that, as a rule, the shortest man in the street will be found to be its official guardian. The dusky faces of a large number of them, moreover, proclaim their Indian origin. But, as a force, they are efficient, and, indeed, in many respects admirable. They contrive to enforce respect even from those heterogenous elements which go to form the population of Buenos Aires, and this by none of those means of terrorism which might have been looked for.

The foreign community, more especially its

younger members who have come into town upon a visit from the Camp, may be looked to for an unbiassed opinion upon the merits of the Buenos Aires Guardians of the peace. And when these, filled with natural, and, just possibly, with alcoholic spirits as well, upon such festal occasions as the Cattle Show, have come into collision with the police, they are only too willing to testify in the latter's favour. The Buenos Aires policeman is forbearing, and, humble student of humanity that he is, contrives to discriminate intelligently between the ethics of a "lark" and those of criminality. That he is fearless in the performance of his duties is sufficiently demonstrated by the police court news of the Boca District—the Stepney of Buenos Aires. It is seldom that a night passes but that one or more of these upholders of the law have been injured when intervening in the numerous brawls which occur in this quarter.

The Buenos Aires policeman indulges in a laudably small amount of fuss. It is true that when making an arrest he occasionally assumes a fierce air, more especially when the delinquent happens to be a cabman who has infringed traffic regulations. Gesticulation and shouting are weapons that he seldom employs, nevertheless. Under his care the streets of Buenos Aires are as safe, if not safer, than those of the majority of the world's great cities. At night, too, when the illumination of the central city is taken into account—a method of lighting, efficient in the extreme, that puts that of London to utter shame—the belated wayfarer may walk the streets in

CASINO AND BRISTOL HOTEL, MAR DEL PLATA.

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absolute confidence, however nervous his disposition.

The system of squares in which the city is laid out is, of course, of immense service to the police. Posted at the corners, they can signal to each other, hasten to each other's assistance, or form an effective cordon at will. Thus in case of a disturbance at night, by no means a common occurrence in the main town, one may hear a succession of whistles which strongly resemble the notes of a boatswain's instrument. Then one may watch a policeman who, having been summoned by the call, hastens along. At each corner he will sound his own note, and, if necessary, the officer who receives the call will blow in his turn. Thus in a few minutes a considerable force is able to be collected, either to bar each street or to converge upon the scene of the disturbance. It is by means of these whistles that an interchange of signals is effected throughout the day, the reply to the long-drawn notes answering to the sentry's call of "All's well!"

It is probable that this system of signalling had its origin in a reason entirely unconnected with the general public. The Buenos Aires police have not always enjoyed the confidence which is at present placed in them. In the old days the force was wont to be composed of mercenaries of evil repute, of the dregs of the city and of foreign countries, and actually of released gaol-birds themselves. Useful as they proved for suppressing the first symptoms of a revolution, their vagaries were nevertheless uncertain in the extreme. By a system of signalling such as described, one became a spy upon the other

to a certain extent, and possible mischief—from the government's point of view—was likely to be frustrated. Indeed, in those days so great was the hatred with which they had imbued the public that any opportunity of revenge was welcomed to the utmost. Such a one occurred during a certain revolution. Tramload after tramload of police were despatched towards a certain point in the city. But the populace en route lay in wait with rifles behind their barred windows. When the cars arrived at their destination they were little else than shambles.

But, *autres temps, autres moeurs*. The Buenos Aires Guardian of the Peace has been raised, morally, intellectually—in everything, in fact, but his stature. In appearance, the mounted men of the force are smarter than the rest. They are exceedingly well horsed, and the sight of a troop of them cantering through Palermo Park inspires the beholder with no little respect.

One is apt to associate cab-drivers with police all the world over, and the Buenos Aires Jehu differs little from his brethren in other parts of the globe. He will "leave it to you;" he will drive a stranger upon a circuitous route to his destination, and he will receive a dollar note with precisely that amount of contempt with which a London cabman will handle a shilling. But he is more independent than this latter, both in manner and in actuality. By law he is bound to accept a passenger for any destination within the town, providing the latter will pay the legal fare. But the Buenos Aires "cochero," in colloquial English, knows two of that! To one who

desires a destination which does not suit him he is simply "occupado"—engaged.

This phase is particularly noticeable on a holiday or in the season when passengers are plentiful, and the chances of a series of short drives—more remunerative than a single long one—are good. One may beckon to a driver, and the chances are that he will stop, that is to say provided that he is not in the act of lighting a cigarette, or occupied in some other way which would cause a sudden handling of the reins to be irksome. "Palermo!" one may command briskly. As soon as the word is uttered the man jerks his reins. He departs with a shake of his head. "Occupado!" Palermo is too far. The same proceeding may be carried on in the case of a dozen cabs, each following the other. "Occupado" is flung back in every key, accompanied by a smile, a scowl, or a look of indifference, until the call of "Palermo" degenerates in tone to a minor key.

Perhaps the simplest method of dealing with these fastidious cabmen is to employ some ruses similar to their own. One may call out the name of a spot which is quite adjacent and alter one's mind en route; or one may enter the vehicle ere one has revealed the secret of one's destination, and refuse to budge afterwards. Such small hints, won at costly experience, are offered merely to strangers in the land. To these latter, moreover, it may be some comfort to learn that in the event of an extortionate charge on the part of the "cochero" the summoning of a policeman is just as effective in Buenos Aires as it is in London.

To term the public vehicle of Buenos Aires a cab is perhaps not altogether accurate. It is a victoria with a hood that hangs so far downward in front as somewhat to obstruct the view of the passenger. In wet weather a rainproof cloth is lowered from the edge of this. The effect is similar to the dropped window of a hansom, with this difference, that in the Victoria one can obtain practically no glimpse of the outer world. A pair of horses are attached to each of these vehicles—by no means from necessity, as, though well built, they are light, and the streets quite level and well paved. As a matter of fact, the extra horse represents a survival from the old days when travelling upon the rutted and muddy surface of the unmade roads was extremely difficult.

The Buenos Aires driver has one merit—even this would be considered a doubtful one by many—in that he drives rapidly. Nevertheless, he can lay no claim to being an expert handler of the ribbons. He is obviously out of sympathy with his horses. To him they represent nothing beyond machine-like instruments of haulage, whose flanks are to be thrashed and whose mouths are to be pulled whenever it chances that the speed flags. Indeed, the townsmen in general here who have to do with beasts of burden, differing widely from the workers in the camp, understand nothing of, or are entirely indifferent to, their nature and capabilities. I have seen a driver flogging a fallen horse to induce it to rise, although the shaft of a heavily laden cart rested fairly across the creature as it lay.

It is pro[illegible]e travelling public may in the

Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 1911

future be relieved to a certain extent from the tyranny of the proud and haughty cabman. A motor-brougham company started its operations in January, 1906. The cars are everything that could be desired, and, owing to the shortness of their build, are peculiarly suitable to the narrow streets of the town.

Private motor cars have now become common in Argentina's capital. These are almost invariably of a small type, for the large car is apt to prove something of a bull in a china shop. Indeed, the only clear run that is possible for a large-sized car is that upon the avenue which leads to Palermo. Upon this broad thoroughfare there is room and to spare. But when the automobile has swallowed up these few miles it may look in vain for more of the kind. Once outside the city, the camp roads await the motor car as the spider longs for the fly, but it is seldom that they get one.

The tramways constitute one of the chief features of Buenos Aires. The general service of the town has the advantage of electric propulsion almost throughout. The cars, although they number few that are "double-decked," are large, well-built, and travel smoothly. Fares here afford a pleasurable contrast to the usual charges of the city. Ten centavos—the equivalent of two pence—will carry the passenger almost from one end of the city to the other.

The facilities for locomotion which the tramway system offers are undoubtedly very great indeed, yet there are occasions when one feels that such ponderous instruments of travel could be dispensed with.

In the narrow streets their advance is akin to that of behemoths. One may be treading the edge of the footpath, suspecting nothing, when there comes the loud clanging of a bell, a heavy rumbling, and the huge body of the car all but grazes the wayfarer's elbow as it sweeps past. For these, in order to leave room in the slender street sufficient for the rest of the traffic, are obliged to run within a foot or two of the curb. Moreover, owing to the system of exact squares in which the city is laid out, it is necessary for the cars to cross one another at right angles at each corner. It speaks well for the caution of the drivers that so few accidents occur, for the approach to one of these points is a leap in the dark. But the bells are kept going, and the cars grope along until the vista opens, and the discovery is made whether the road is clear, or, if another car be approaching at right angles, which of the pair has precedence.

The service is an extremely liberal and efficient one, and the number of cars employed must be very great. Should a block occur, it is a common occurrence a minute or two later to see a dozen of these halted the one behind the other in a long string. The drivers and conductors are uniformed after the English model in grey, with dark green piping, or in some similar unostentatious hues. They are, moreover, as capable and as courteous as could possibly be expected.

There was a regulation concerning smoking in these cars in force until recently, which, upon the face of it, appeared the acme of sound commonsense combined with politeness. A man was freely per-

mitted to smoke in any of them—provided that no lady were present. Yet the practical workings of this rule led to much heart-burning and bitterness. One might light a cigar, for instance, in a car that was entirely void of femininity. But a lady might very possibly enter just a second later. In which case there were but two alternatives—to fling the weed through the window to lie in the gutter, or to remain in its company—outside. The decision naturally depended much on the quality of the Havana. And all this mischief could be wrought by a mere slip of a girl in her teens!

There was a story concerning this which recently went the round of the Argentine papers, and which proved, in the end, food for much discussion. According to this, a couple of Englishmen, in defiance of the regulations, were smoking in one of the cars when a lady was present. The conductor, stepping forward to intervene, found them reluctant to desist. After numerous unavailing protests he caused the car to be stopped with a view to their ejection by the police. But just when the righteous triumph of the officials seemed secured, the lady, who, it appears, was also English, and, as it turned out, in the company of the smokers, unexpectedly took sides with the offenders. She herself drew out a cigarette and lit it. Her action clinched the matter. The baffled conductor retired to his footboard without further ado.

Whatever the reason may have been—whether this story, hotly denied by the local English papers, and stigmatised as an ancient legend hashed up, had any-

thing to do with the matter, or whether the modus operandi was found generally impracticable—the regulation was shortly afterwards withdrawn. Now, no smoke whatever may defile the interior of the tramcars.

There are pick-pockets in Buenos Aires as well as elsewhere, and recently these pests have been devoting special attention to the tramway. Their methods were daring in the extreme. At a corner where a considerable number of people were waiting to board the cars three or four well-dressed men would mingle with the crowd, and when the moment came they would ascend the step with the rest. It would be so managed that in the ensuing crush they would closely surround the passenger whose appearance bespoke the most wealth. The proceeding was apparently inadvertent, but while the man was thus tightly wedged in his pockets were rifled. Then the gang would suddenly discover that they had boarded the wrong car, and descend in haste.

It was the pure audacity of the move that led to its success. For the victim, though he knew well enough as a rule what had happened, was loth to believe that it was at the hands of that group of extremely well-groomed señores that he had suffered robbery, and was still more reluctant to accuse them of the crime. By the time his mind was made up it was too late. The serious part of the matter was that a number of conductors knew these thieves perfectly well by sight, but, however honest themselves, so terrorised were they by the miscreants that they dared not interefere. The police, however, have now

stepped in with a disconcerting thoroughness, and such barefaced robberies have all but ceased.

The network of tram lines now extends to the remoter suburbs. Of the older fashioned streets of the main city the aristocratic Calle Florida is practically the only one of importance which is innocent of rails. In this neighbourhood the heavy traffic naturally impedes the progress of the cars. If one would experience what they can do in the matter of speed one should journey by one of them towards Belgrano or some similar suburb. Here they are wont to move at a pace which causes the most inveterate tram boarder to hesitate ere he mounts or descends from one in motion.

And here it may be mentioned that a recently arrived foreigner of the class of the Italians and Basques, who have come to the large city from the rural wilds of their own lands, are to be detected by their methods of descent from the moving tram cars. Seeing others descend in safety, one of these will essay to do the same, but usually in the manner as though he were stepping from one stationary spot to another. The result is a sprawling body in the roadway, and the bystanders murmur "immigrant." Such happenings would be too trivial for mention were it not that the numerous cars and the immense numbers of immigrants render them of such frequent occurrence.

CHAPTER IX.

BUENOS AIRES.

The Traffic Question—Licenses—Porters—An expensive city—The cost of necessities and luxuries—Servants—Some local ethics of hospitality—the Argentine cigarette—Rus in urbe.

Buenos Aires, as a town that takes pride in itself, leaves little undone that may sustain the handsome appearance of its houses and streets. The cleansing of these latter is conducted in the most efficient manner. Powerful hoses are continually at work during the summer, and the number of humble officials whose business it is to preserve the immaculateness of the thoroughfares is considerable. During the very early hours of the morning one may light upon a procession that at first glimpse strongly suggests an artillery train. A number of clean-limbed mules pace slowly forward, dragging behind them a contrivance to which are attached large brushes. These, sweeping along the streets, facilitate greatly the labour of scavenging. In all respects such as these Buenos Aires can shine forth as an example which many other cities might follow with profit to themselves. There, one has to rise very early in the morning indeed, if one would see the refuse of the previous day littering the streets.

The traffic question is one which already constitutes a difficulty. It is bound, moreover, to create still greater embarrassment in the near future unless

some drastic measures be resolved upon for its alleviation. At present a method is resorted to which, even though it obviates blocks to a certain extent, induces other inconveniences which are almost as disagreeable. Along the more crowded streets the vehicular traffic is permitted to proceed only in one direction. The system necessitates a most annoying spell of tacking, so far as carriages are concerned. If, for instance, when driving in such a street, one has accidentally overshot one's destination, one would naturally feel inclined to turn about, and drive the short distance back to it. But any proceeding of the kind is sternly prohibited. It is necessary to turn the next corner, say to the right; a further turning in the same direction lands one in the street parallel to the first. One must proceed back along this until a point has been arrived at which is beyond the required spot in the parallel street. Another turning to the right brings the driver to the corner of the original street itself; yet another turning to the right permits him to move down with the stream of traffic and arrive at his destination!

The system is an exasperating one, and it is to be hoped this attempt at a lucid explanation of its working will not prove equally so. Yet, though these four turnings are necessary in order to retrace one's way for perhaps fifty yards or so, the general plan is not so unreasonable after all in view of the frequency of the blocks which already occur. The "cochero," of course, has his own opinions on the matter. In the course of a drive about the town should one chance to find the vehicle's career

abruptly arrested by a stern-faced policeman, there is no need for alarm. It only means that the driver has been surprised in an attempt to evade the regulations.

Licenses are much in vogue in Buenos Aires; too much so in the opinion of those who find themselves compelled to pay for them. In order to trade in any shape or form a license is required, whether the commerce be wholesale or retail. Certificates and diplomas relating to many professions are frequently costly affairs. In fact, the ramifications of the kind are so widespread that the government revenue from this source must be considerable.

The system extends throughout almost all grades to the very railway porter. The humble carrier of luggage may not shoulder a trunk unless he possesses a licence entitling him to follow this occupation. This latter regulation, at all events, has much to commend it. Each regular porter carries a small brass badge upon which is engraved his number. Without this his métier would be gone, for none would employ him. So that when in exchange for the care of the trunks he hands the traveller his badge there is little cause for anxiety concerning the safety of the luggage. Then, when this latter has been deposited in the train, cab, steamer or hotel, the porter receives back his badge together with his earnings.

These porters are enterprising fellows. Not content to be tied to the precincts of Railway Stations and other such places, they frequently take up their posts far afield in order to make doubly certain of

GAUCHO WITH LASSO.

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custom. They possess an eagle's eye for a "coche" laden with luggage. One may be driving in the direction of a railway station in one of these, and, ere one has arrived within a mile of the spot, a porter will make his sudden appearance upon the step, having to all appearance sprung from out of thin air. After he has held out his brass badge for acceptance, he seats himself by the step, and arrives at the station in company with his employer.

The Buenos Aires shops are much the same as those which may be seen in London, Paris, and any other large city of the first rank. Individuality is more evident in the markets. Of these probably the most interesting is the La Plata Market, situated in the centre of the town. Meat and poultry is set out with extreme daintiness here, considering the large quantity displayed. But the fruit department is that which most strongly attracts the eye. There are pyramids of peaches and nectarines, quaint designs in pears and grapes, and patterns in figs and the more exotic produce. Indeed, all the fruit here is exhibited in a most elaborate and tempting form.

It has been said that Argentina's capital holds out luxuries that are refused by few of its inhabitants. At the same time it must be remembered that—to say nothing of these luxuries—the cost of mere necessities of life is enormously expensive here. It would be imagined that in a country swarming with cattle and sheep the price of meat would be the equivalent of the twopence or threepence a pound which is the usual charge in our own antipodean countries. As a matter of fact, the cost of the commodity is very little

beneath that in England. It is the same with groceries, and all other articles of the kind, while even fruit which is grown in such striking abundance just without the city realises a price which is quite fictitious when its true value in the country is considered.

Clothes are almost worth their weight in silver, and, if one can judge by appearances, several of the fashionable tailors must possess enviable banking accounts. The charges of these latter for their productions are at least double those which a first-class Bond Street establishment would make. That most important item, house rent, bids fair, moreover, to make an uncomfortable hole in a modest pocket. The smallest flat in a really good quarter can be obtained for little beneath the equivalent of two hundred pounds a year, while the rent of an entire house is in proportion.

The wages of servants are abnormally high. These latter, too, possess strong views in favour of two persons doing the work of one. In the matter of entertaining, an average Havana cigar cannot be obtained beneath a dollar (one shilling and tenpence), while the price of all European wines is almost exactly as much again as that which one is accustomed to pay for the same brands at home.

From all this it will be evident that an inhabitant of Buenos Aires who is the possessor of anything less than a thousand a year will cut a very modest figure indeed in the capital. Of course, it must be taken into consideration that the success of the

merchants and the salaries paid to employés are imposing almost in proportion to this.

It must be said that this cost of living is to a certain extent unnatural. The phase is rather an attendant on prosperity than one caused from any economic reason. Should Argentina strike again upon less affluent days it would be seen that the price of both necessities and luxuries would at once fall with that of land, stocks, and all else. But it is to be hoped that the former eventuality may occur without the latter.

To come to those materials which serve for what some term minor vices; others creature comforts. Argentina already brews beer and manufactures soda water in considerable quantities for itself. The heavier types of ales have almost entirely disappeared in favour of Pilsen Beer, which latter light beverage would seem eminently suitable to the climate. The most important Brewery of this order is situated at Quilmes in the near neighbourhood of Buenos Aires, and its products compare very favourably with the imported article. Both this and the native-manufactured soda are retailed at reasonable prices, differing widely in this respect from those products of the kind which come from oversea.

The importation of whisky is considerable, and the best known brands can be obtained throughout the country. In the remoter districts of the Camp it is necessary to exercise caution, as in some instances the bottles of well-known distillers and blenders are bought up when empty, and filled again with some iniquitous local fluid. In one sense the pro-

ceeding demonstrates the civilisation of the Camp. It has arrived at the stage of knowledge and appreciation of labels, and the small attempts to improve the shining liquid from a remunerative point of view have parallels in plenty nearer home. In any reputable spot in Buenos Aires, however, one may rely upon the quality supplied with as much confidence as elsewhere.

The cocktail has become a settled institution in Argentina. Of these the chief favourite is that known as the "San Martin." The old hero of Argentina's name is liberally employed for nomenclature all over the land, but it is certain that nothing has immortalised it so effectively as this cocktail. But a computation as to the exact number of times the word "San Martin" is employed in the course of a day in Argentina must be left to a specialist in statistics.

The methods employed here in what may be termed the more Bohemian ethics of hospitality differ from those of our own colonies. In the majority of these it is the custom for one man to "shout"—as the Australasian term goes. Upon which, as likely as not, another may reciprocate the compliment. In Buenos Aires and throughout Argentina the leathern dice boxes lie in readiness at every club, restaurant, and bar to settle the question, and the loser of the throw pays the piper. The South American dwellers' apology for the use of these dice is, strangely enough, in the nature of a temperance argument. They urge that the custom lends itself to far less abuse of hospitality than that of "shouting." When a party of men throw dice, for instance, and one of them loses,

GAUCHOS.

HORSE, SHOWING GAUCHO SADDLE.

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the others are under no obligation to him whatever. It is the privilege of the loser to pay, that is all. Unless the spontaneous idea should occur to the party to dice once again, the incident may be considered at an end. It appears to me that there is not a little sound common sense in this, and that these evil-looking dice boxes are, as a matter of fact, temperance agents in considerable disguise.

The cigarette is the only form in which tobacco commends itself to all good Argentines, and in Buenos Aires these small "death tubes" are seldom absent from a male mouth. They would seem to take as long in killing here as they do elsewhere. The extent to which the habit is indulged in might perhaps appear a little startling to an Englishman who has graduated in a more rigid school. Even in the most important offices, Argentine, English, and others, the clerks are accustomed to smoke whenever they feel inclined. The policeman at the less frequented posts are wont to hold a cigarette between their lips, while the waiters in the best restaurants will blow clouds of smoke in their own corner when not actively engaged in waiting.

The cigarettes most in vogue are those manufactured in the country. The flavour of these lies half way between the Caporal of France and the stronger cigarette of Havana. The proportion of other brands smoked is infinitesimal. Newcomers to the country are wont to persist for a while in their adherence to the Turkish, Egyptian or Virginian specimens to which they have been accustomed, but after a time they one and all fall into the

habit of smoking the native cigarette. That once acquired, it takes a great deal of persuasion to cause them to renew acquaintance with any foreign brands.

There is little to choose between these various makes of cigarettes. One brand, however, which claims for itself that it is manufactured from tobacco of extra quality employs rather unique methods of demonstrating this. The tobacco is loosely wrapped in paper twisted at either end. Thus, in order to prepare it for lighting it is necessary first of all to undo the paper, by which means its contents are exposed to full view.

The topic of Buenos Aires cannot be forsaken without a word upon the stockyards which are situated within the city. One may be walking along a thoroughfare as thronged as Oxford Street when the nostrils will be assailed by an odour of farmyard which at first seems incomprehensible. One may seek for the cause of a thing so incompatible with its surroundings, and discover a broad gateway which leads directly from the street. Passing through this, a strange instance of *rus in urbe* presents itself. One is in a large, covered yard, whose walls are lined by a multitude of pens and stalls. Here are pedigree bulls—Durhams, Herefords, Polled Angus, and others. A notice by the side of each stall tells of their pedigree, and whether they have arrived direct from England or been sent in by some of the breeders in the Camp. Further on are pens of sheep, stalls occupied by mules, and others by rows of horses. In odd corners are companies of poultry, a possible specimen or two of goats and pigs, and any other

creature for which the country has use. Each, as may be imagined, is more or less distinguished of its kind, for the cost of the transport which these have incurred would have been squandered on any but first-class animals.

Here they await the time when the auction shall determine their future ownership. There are many of these yards which may be lit on quite unexpectedly in the very centre of Buenos Aires. They stand for a symbol of the economic foundation upon which the city rests. For without these, and the wheat and maize, and other products of the Camp, Buenos Aires would know nothing of its present splendour.

CHAPTER X.

THREE IMPORTANT TOWNS.

LA PLATA—The artificiality of the town—A stagnant city—Palaces and grass-grown streets—Municipal Methods—ROSARIO—A minor Buenos Aires—A Wheat Centre—BAHIA BLANCA—A rising port—Its future influence upon the Republic—Fortunate land investments—Camp towns.

Although the city of Buenos Aires is the capital of the Argentine Republic, it is in the anomalous position of being permitted to play nothing beyond second fiddle in its own particular province. The capital of this latter is La Plata. Situated nearer to the mouth of the estuary than Buenos Aires, the distance which separates the two towns is about thirty-five miles. Nevertheless, in all respects but that of actual space the two are as far apart as the North Pole is from the South. Buenos Aires is a thriving, bustling town, that spreads its buildings ever outwards as the pressure at its centre increases. La Plata, on the other hand, represents the corpse of a city. There are some, it is true, who assert that its condition is merely one of coma, from which it will one day be awakened to surprise the world with its great and wonderful doings. But that is for the future to decide. At present it is a city of palatial husks.

It was in 1882 that the Government decided that there should be a town of La Plata. It was to be worthy of its rank as the capital of the wealthiest

MUSTERING FOR A "RODEO."

province of a wealthy Republic. To this end was built the finest architectural raiment for a corporate body that could be conceived even of Argentine ostentation. And this latter, when given free rein, is wont to reach a pitch of Oriental magnificence. Stately edifices, palatial law courts and municipal buildings, museums, and a university rose up at the bidding. There was to be a cathedral, too, vast and stately in proportion. Broad avenues, paved and tree-planted, stretched their long lengths between the imposing façades.

La Plata, in fact, was a city of which it was hoped that, when matured, its splendour would bring to mind those pictured conceptions of the visionary and perfect town. The place, indeed, was laid out with an astonishing degree of boldness, ambition, and skill. In La Plata each edifice was to be lent its proper weight of dignity. There was to be no crowding together of palaces here, nor were rows of mean houses permitted to jostle the stately walls as in the case of older places. To this end the gorgeous buildings were dotted at regular intervals about the town, each in its own gardens, faced by its boulevard or Plaza, and separated from the next by a dignified line of private houses. There was to be no vulgar hustling in La Plata. In justice to its founders, let it be said that there never *has* been anything of the sort.

The first glimpse of the city, as it is, is apt to produce an effect upon the spectator that is little short of awesome. But for the few figures that hover about here and there, one might be in a city of the

dead. One may gaze along many streets—and wonder at them. There are avenues with their extensive sweep of carriage way, sufficiently broad to admit of rows of trees in the centre, designed to resound to the noise of many wheels, and with their spacious sidewalks that should have rung to the multitudinous tramp of feet—one may gaze the length of one of these, and see not a single human being from end to end. One may stroll within one of the splendidly laid out parks where trees and palms abound, and statues and green chairs. But the shrubs have grown unkempt, the grass long, and, as to the chairs, they are empty, every one.

There is an abundance of grass in La Plata. There are people sufficiently unfeeling to assert that, with a little more of it, the place would be a lawn. As it is, it thrusts its green tufts upwards through the pavements of the main streets, and, as to the others that are less central, they are smothered in verdure. Indeed, the grass is everywhere, sprouting from crevices in neglected walls and roofs, and clinging to the stump of the cathedral building itself. For, alas, the cathedral is not yet complete. The lower half only of its vast, dull red structure looms up about the broad space that its walls enclose. It is oppressively great—in itself, in its desolation, and in the silence that broods about it. But if one listens one may hear the sound of a very faint tinkling within. One may enter to learn the cause, and may see a couple of ant-like men all but lost amidst the great blocks of stone that litter the grass-grown surface of the interior. They are tranquilly chipping at masonry. And as

one watches the couple of diminutive figures in the centre of that which is at present a huge open courtyard one wonders how many generations those sparrows above will know ere their nests are flung down from the yawning walls of the cathedral.

But, though first impressions tend somewhat towards the supposition, it must not be thought that La Plata is entirely destitute of inhabitants. Within the law courts one may discern some movement; a cab *does* occasionally rattle in an echoing fashion over the displaced paving stones, and a group will collect now and again before one of the houses. Indeed, there must be a quantity of folk stored somewhere in the neighbourhood of this apparently deserted city. The census, for instance, by a kindly and altogether extraordinary stretch of imagination estimates its population at over fifty thousand souls! It must be said as a partial explanation of this discrepancy that in this is included the population of the town and docks of Ensenada, in which both activity and considerable population are evident. But Ensenada, though known as the Port of La Plata, is three miles distant, and the comparative whirl of its existence leaves the streets of the main city unaffected.

The train service which the Great Southern Railway provides between La Plata and Buenos Aires is an excellent one, two routes, one via Quilmes, the other via Temperley, being available for the purpose. As a matter of fact, it is at the La Plata Railway station that the most animated scenes of the town's everyday life are evident. Here of a morning and

evening one may watch the arrival of those government employés and others who, it was fondly hoped, would have gone to swell the population of the city otherwise than on paper. As it is, they live in Buenos Aires, journeying to and fro each day. Of the actual methods of La Plata officialdom in the matter of finance and concerning the issue and redemption of bonds, perhaps the less said the better. The past reputation of the municipality is an unfortunate one, and the general opinion inclines to the view that it has been well earned.

There was a time, before the opening of the Buenos Aires Docks to large mail steamers, when La Plata was the scene of far greater activity than now. But the liners whose arrival was wont to give employment to so many now churn by on their way through the muddy waters, oblivious of the existence of the port. The docks at Ensenada, in consequence, important though they remain, have no further concern with the aristocracy of ships. This is perhaps a little hard on the minor town, as the docks here form the natural port to Buenos Aires. But in any case this does not affect the aspect of the official town. This, with its palatial buildings and broad streets overspread with the silent gloom that desertion and desolation involve, is well worth a visit.

Compared with La Plata, the large port of Rosario upon the Parana River is commonplace in its bustling activity. Second in size and importance to Buenos Aires, the city is to a great extent a replica of the national capital on a smaller scale. In the matter of buildings, plazas, electric lighting, and

other municipal adornments it is well up to date. So far as tramways are concerned, however, it has much to learn from Buenos Aires. The number of English residents within the town is considerable, and these predominate in the pleasant club which the town boasts.

As a commercial centre the importance of the spot is great. Tapping the greater portion of the province of Cordoba and much of Santa Fé, it deals with wheat in enormous quantities in addition to other cereals and livestock. As a port, it is accessible not only to the river steamers, but also to the large ocean-going vessels, of which a great number visit the spot in the course of the year. At the present moment the port is in the act of being enlarged. The immense undertaking is in the hands of a French Company. No doubt the difficulties to be overcome are considerable. One may meet, for instance, with this Company's lighters far up on the Uruguay, where they have been towed in search of shingle and stone, in which commodities the neighbourhood of Rosario is lacking. When the task is achieved, however, the benefits which will accrue to the port cannot fail to be considerable.

In addition to its communications by water, a considerable network of railways converges upon the town. The Buenos Aires and Rosario, the Central Argentine, the Cordoba and Rosario, and the Santa Fé are the lines which connect with the spot. So far as actual distance is concerned, the railway route between Rosario and Buenos Aires is considerably shorter than the course of the steamers upon the

river. The population of the town is estimated at about 190,000.

Bahia Blanca is a name the significance of which, though fully realised in Argentina, has not yet been grasped by many in Europe. Nor is this surprising when the mushroom-like growth—an exceedingly solid one, for all that—of the place is taken into consideration. As a port, its strategic value from a commercial point of view cannot well be over-rated. Until recently the produce of the Southern and South-Western Argentine Provinces has been transferred to Buenos Aires. The latter town, in fact, has acted as the magnet to which millions of tons have been drawn —out of their natural course. But now Bahia Blanca has risen up, and is continuing to rise with almost incredible speed each year. Not so long ago the spot represented little more than a sandy waste. Now there are steam tramways, moles, and, in fact, every attribute of a thriving and rising port.

The value of land in the neighbourhood of the town has risen, as a consequence, by leaps and bounds. Indeed, those who, foreseeing what was to come, invested their capital in this manner have considerable cause to be thankful for the judgment which moved them. The process, moreover, is still continuing, and, in view of the circumstances, it is scarcely likely that the "boom" can have reached to any point within approach of its ultimate height yet. Strictly speaking, the term "boom" in its accepted sense has no right to be applied to a progress and consequent general increase in values such as that which is occurring at Bahia Blanca.

Although the results have equalled many of those which have followed on the discovery of a fresh mining centre, the cause is widely different. Bahia Blanca fills what is termed "a long felt need," and it is difficult to see that anything less than the total failure of agriculture in the great tracts of the South and South-West can affect its growing prosperity.

Both the Great Southern and the Buenos Aires and Pacific Railways are deeply interested in the port. The Great Southern, as the first in the field, held the practical monopoly of the traffic for years. But the Buenos Aires and Pacific have come upon the scene, and have more than made up for lost time. They have built and enlarged moles, warehouses, and every other appurtenance to the traffic, until their hold upon the place has grown very firm indeed. A line is now in construction, moreover, which, cutting through the heart of the Pampa Province, proceeds on its way to join the Company's Northern System. By which means an immense tract of rich country will be opened up to traffic, and doubtless to the glory of the Buenos Aires and Pacific as well.

To what extent the port of Bahia Blanca will eventually rival that of Buenos Aires it is difficult enough to judge. One thing is certain, that there is room and to spare for both. The chances of the future may, without the least fear of exaggeration, be considered as the following—that should Bahia Blanca ever attain to a magnitude such as that of Buenos Aires at the present time, the development need by no means occur at the expense of the Northern City. On the contrary, such a growth—

whether the result were arrived at in ten, twenty, or thirty years—would act as a healthful brake upon the feverish strides of the older city. But there would be no question on the latter's part of shrinkage or even of a condition of standstill. For the proportionate increase in products—according to the present ratio—of those districts which it rightfully serves is bound to do more than compensate for the loss of controlling the Southern districts. It is possible that the mere consideration of such a possibility on the part of Bahia Blanca may be termed a proceeding of the wildest order. But things very little less astonishing have happened in Argentine ere now—and, as a matter of fact, it would be a rash prophet that would predict the point at which the Southern port, with all the rich territory at its back, will stay its progress.

Bahia Blanca, it may be said, has certain claims to importance apart from its commercial status. It is the naval port of Argentina, and the site, moreover, of the arsenal.

The "Camp towns" of Argentina, those minor collections of buildings dotted here and there on the face of the plains, have, generally speaking, few claims to architectural beauty. Fashioned for the most part upon the same model, they are to be distinguished by the extreme breadth of their streets, and by the uncompromising lines of the buildings that flank them. The latter, single-storied, and fashioned of dull, terra-cotta coloured brick, present a somewhat box-like appearance when detached. The surface of the roof is wont to be flat, with the excep-

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THE CATTLE BATH.

tion of that portion which adjoins the front wall. This latter is raised to a greater height than the rest for the purpose of lending a loftier appearance to the building. Thus the roof to the front of the house rises at an acute angle to join the top of this wall of dissimulation. The aspect of one of these houses viewed from the side is somewhat curious. It is exactly as though an isosceles triangle had, for some reason or other, been attached to the front portion of its roof.

The camp towns are peaceful enough spots as a rule. Many of their features would perhaps strike curiously upon one accustomed to European towns. The want of open-fronted shops, and the lack of street life as elsewhere understood are among the most salient of these.

CHAPTER XI.

MAR DEL PLATA.

A fashionable sea-side resort—An Argentine description—The Rambla—Some matters of costume—Sea bathing and life preservers—The Sands—Scene at the railway station upon arrival—Hotel life and its cost—The Casino—Fruit sellers at the "Bristol"—Some landscape features—The Mar del Plata Golf Links—Pigeon shooting—Industrial attributes.

Mar del Plata is deserving of a chapter to itself if for no other reason than that the town constitutes the sole sea-side resort of which Argentina can boast. But if it be a ewe lamb of watering places, it is, at all events, a healthy enough specimen of a progressive pleasure town. To Argentine ears the name comes with a very pleasant ring. Indeed, these latter make the most of the spot, and it must be admitted that this town by the waves, in return, makes all that it can out of its visitors. Mar del Plata is fashionable to a degree, and, as such, is a costly though an agreeable place to frequent.

The words of an Argentine writer may serve as a preliminary introduction to the spot. The translation is literal, although I have taken the liberty of rendering some of the adjectives in a somewhat less flowery form than they assumed in the original. Even then it must be admitted that the composition does not err on the side of restraint. The description is the following:—

"All at Mar del Plata suggests the refinement of a bathing resort. The waves of the Atlantic beat

softly upon the sandy beaches. The magnificent hotels are filled with a *monde*, cultured and sociable, that fills the summer evenings with joy. The English *cottages* and the luxurious chalets are dotted upon the slopes with all their graceful architecture and modern comfort. The days are balmy and the nights perfumed; the concerts, dances, strolls upon the "Rambla," the gracious life of the élite—all this enlivens the spot, and causes the summer months to pass by in an enchanting fashion. And, above all, the inevitable 'flirtation' is wont to insinuate itself in the midst of this delightful frame of mind, commencing with discreet love-makings in the romantic light of the moon, in improvised excursions, during which one may enjoy with a full pulse the beauty of nature, and ending in the interchange of marriage vows to the accompaniment of delicious blushes on the part of the maiden, and nervous agitation on that of the future Benedict."

Such is Mar del Plata! Judging from this somewhat effervescing sketch, one gathers that it is in the possession of qualities which savour of various places—of Paradise, Monte Carlo, Ostend, and Margate. As a matter of fact, it is wont to be likened to Brighton by the English; a comparison that is facile rather than accurate.

The main portion of the town lies in a break amidst the hills that line the sea-shore. Its outskirts, however, spreading ever more widely, have now commenced to climb the slopes to the North and South. These hills, sufficiently rare in themselves in those latitudes of Argentina, are somewhat akin in appear-

ance to the English Downs. The sight of them is not a little exhilarating to those who have spent a considerable period upon the dead flat plains of Buenos Aires.

The sea front appertaining to Mar del Plata stretches the length of three bays—that of La Perla on the north side, St. James' on the South, and in the centre one which, apparently failing a definite name, may be termed the Mar del Plata Bay. It is here that one of the objects of the town's chief pride, the "Rambla" extends itself. The "Rambla" is a broad wooden promenade that fringes the beach for a considerable space, and is backed by a row of shops of the fancy order and by restaurants. The place represents one of the principal centres of Mar del Plata life. The aspect of the crowd that throngs it, moreover, is well worthy of a good many hours' study. Here during the season one may see the owners of the best known names, both Argentine and foreign, in the Republic.

The spot is essentially "dressy." The men are wont to turn out in London-built clothes of faultless cut, although in the matter of yachting caps and similar adornments the taste displayed is of a more exotic kind than would be permitted at a similar resort in England. As to the ladies, Mar del Plata is to them a veritable sun that causes costumes to break out in fresh hues each day. A festal occasion in Buenos Aires affords a revelation of what these ladies are capable of in this respect. But for a season in Mar del Plata it is no exaggeration to say that the costumier's establishments in far away Paris are

A "PULPERIA," INN.

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ed. The stories told upon the point are rable. There are some, it is whispered—but too lowly a key—of these favoured airesses who will consent to wear no single t twice—at Mar del Plata. There are even the passionate grief that ensued when the in the forwarding of fresh costumes made contretemps possible. All of which, however, ip, and, as such, to be discouraged. Let it that the Mar del Plata lady of fashion is akin lily of the field and to the chameleon at the me. One may do worse than retire into one pen-fronted cafés and watch from its shelter cession that passes with the blue waves of the background.

town is essentially a pleasure resort. Like ther place of the kind, it exists purely for its which in this case endures for about three . The principal amusements provided for isitors consist of pigeon-shooting, golf, and hing. Beyond this there is the attraction that sino provides with its roulette and petits . This, as a matter of fact, forms one of the mportant features of the spot, and a large ion of the visitors frequent the place for no urpose than to tempt the goddess of chance.

athing at Mar del Plata, although extremely t, is an amusement in which it is necessary to with the utmost caution. The surf itself, it can thunder pretty effectually at times, is atively innocuous. With the ocean currents, r, the matter is very different. There are

times when these run with sufficient swiftness to resist the efforts of the strongest swimmer. Indeed, for any but those most expert in the art of natation to venture out of their depth here is undoubtedly a rash proceeding. As a matter of fact, it is doubtful whether one of these would be permitted to do this, even had he the inclination.

The authorities of Mar del Plata are both cautious and watchful. Scattered along the beach are stalwart men, in dark-hued garments that are practically bathing costumes, who bear coils of rope in their hands. Their mission is to safeguard the lives of the bathers. These "bañeros" are undoubtedly very fine fellows, and can count many a prolonged existence to their credit. At times, however, the enthusiasm for their profession would seem entirely to overpower them. On such occasions they will dash in amongst the waves and rescue a bather by force, quite regardless of whether he considers himself in need of assistance or not. It is useless for the latter to protest. When the bañeros are moved to action they will be satisfied with nothing less than dragging him ashore in triumph. And then follows a certain moral obligation concerning a reward which even the most strong-minded finds difficult to resist under the circumstances. At the same time any such little irresponsibilities on the part of the bañero need not detract from his undoubted usefulness when there is real occasion for him. It is only when the water rises no higher than the waist that one need beware of the ardent life-saver.

The arrangements for bathing accommodation are

good throughout Mar del Plata. There is no necessity here to be cooped up in one of those small, dark, movable prisons that still obtain in England. The bathing houses are picturesque, roomy, and have as a rule the very pleasant advantage of a verandah in front. The price of this accommodtion, moreover, which averages fifty centavos (ten pence), is decidedly cheap when compared with the rates which prevail in Mar del Plata in general.

There is a tradition that this present vogue of sea-bathing was instituted many years ago by an English seaman who, shipwrecked, landed at the spot. The occurrence happened at that period when the Argentines themselves had just discovered the pleasurable possibilities of the spot. The sailor, alive to his opportunity, decided to make the place his home. In due course he became the proprietor of the first bathing establishment. From the excessive popularity that he won for himself it seems likely that he must have graduated at a watering place at home. One can imagine him well—the "salt" turned longshoreman, cajoling the then inexpert Argentines into their natatory efforts in the bluff yet winning manner of his kind! He is reported to have made a fortune over the business, and it is likely enough that he did. One thing is certain, however. If he, or his shade, were to return to Mar del Plata at the present moment, its glorified aspects would astonish him not a little.

The sands of Mar del Plata at the height of its season afford as gay a scene as that which any continental watering place can display. Nurses and

children beneath the shade of tents, entertainers, salesmen, and bathers—all these are here in their hundreds. Here and there are the coastguards, dark of face for the most part, who, with their cutlasses at their side, make a brave parade amidst the gaily dressed throng.

The Argentine sea-side resort is emphatically no place for the owner of a slim purse. The evidence of this is forthcoming at the very moment of arrival. Porters here are wont to look askance at a "tip" which in Buenos Aires—itself a city of high remunerative ethics—would be accepted with gratitude. In the station yard, too, it is unwise to attempt to bargain with a cabman, at any rate during the season. The consequences of such misplaced caution are wont to be lamentable. The Jehu will refuse with contempt to enter into any negotiations whatever. He will take a passenger on his own terms, and will make a favour of the proceeding even then. If the matter be not immediately clinched, he, together with the rest of his fellow benefactors, will be overwhelmed with the general exodus from the station. A little later the whole army of cabs will have departed, bearing off a host of less cautiously minded persons, and leaving a number of stranded and chastened folk to await the leisurely return of the vehicles with such patience as is vouchsafed them.

Indeed, the arrival of a train here gives birth to a busy scene. The yard is filled with the newly arrived passengers. There are cries and clamorous appeals for a vehicle, while bribed emissaries speed here and there amidst the crowd in order that their

HARVESTING CART.

AMONGST THE CORDOBA HILLS.

OX WAGON.

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additional weight of influence may bring to light a conveyance that is not "occupado." And above it all the cabby sits in triumphant calm, more or less indifferent in the face of the choice offered him.

The cost of hotel life in Mar del Plata is on a par with all else. The obtaining of a room, moreover, is not always such an easy matter, although the place is well provided with good hotels. By far the largest of these is the Hotel Bristol, a caravanserai that is probably the best in South America. The establishment consists of a main building, with a couple of annexes, one on either hand. In these latter, which each occupy a square of the town, are situated the bedrooms. The main building is by far the most imposing of the three. Here is the dining-room, a magnificent apartment, while next to it is a large entertainment hall, upholstered and decorated in a gorgeous style, which, containing a stage at one end, is used for the purposes of dances, concerts and theatricals at will.

Upon the other side of a broad terrace is the Casino. Part and parcel of the hotel establishment, it has modelled its ethics upon those of the European gaming centres. In order to gain admittance to the inner rooms, however, where roulette is played, a fee of ten dollars, which serves as a pass for one night or for the length of the season alike, is charged. Entrance to the outer room, devoted to the interests of *petits-chevaux*, is free to all. But the amounts risked here are paltry, compared with the sums which change hands in the inner sanctum. There is a system in vogue in this haunt of high play that is

lacking in most of the European places of the kind. It is possible to obtain as an equivalent for money a number of counters of a particular colour—those that have the highest face value are very pretty playthings of mother of pearl. By this means confusion as to the ownership of a stake is to a great extent obviated, and the methods of sharpers in this respect rendered useless. The croupiers here are as decorous and sphinxlike as any at Monte Carlo. In view of the salary they receive (over forty pounds per month) there is no reason why they should not be.

The scene upon the terrace at night is extremely pretty. The place is thronged with the visitors, more especially just after the dinner hour. It is the favourite promenade of the ladies. And these, gliding to and fro with Argentine grace in the brilliant glow of the electric light, afford serious rivalry to the attractions of the tables within. But, sad to relate, it is seldom that the latter do not prove the more powerful magnets in the end.

There is one rather curious custom prevailing at the Bristol Hotel which is worthy of mention. At the entrance to the large dining-hall one is confronted by a number of fruit sellers who offer baskets filled with every variety of the produce. The visitor, having purchased one of these, carries it with him to his table and partakes of its contents for dessert. The custom appeals as a pleasant one at first; the baskets are inviting and the choice large. But after a while it occurs to the visitor to demand why the hotel itself does not follow the usual Argentine system of providing fruit with table-d'hôte meals.

An Englishman connected with the Company informed me that the reason lay in the fact that the Argentines had formerly been accustomed to help themselves with such freedom to the fruit that none but the very poor specimens were left over for the remaining guests. A little later an Argentine favoured me with a similar version—in fact the same, with the exception that the blame of over-indulgence was laid in this case at the foreigner's door. Neither explanation seemed convincing. Indeed, it appeared a little obvious that the difficulty might have been overcome by a more generous supply of good fruit. Few, however, who come to the Bristol are given to object to such extras as these, for the hotel is palatial and the cuisine excellent.

Making all allowance for the poetic fervour of its Argentine admirer whose words are quoted at the beginning of this chapter, it must be admitted that Mar del Plata has much to recommend itself. To a visitor from the neighbourhood of Buenos Aires the fact is especially evident. Indeed, it is only after his arrival at the spot that the conviction reveals itself that he has been a little obsessed by that superabundance of *land*—thousands of square miles of dark brown earth that, all powerful, has dyed the great La Plata River itself to its own hue, so that its surface may scarcely be distinguished from the soil about it. But here there is colour. The sands are of an undoubted yellow; the blue rollers are grateful to the eye, and the down-like hills fall and rise in pleasant curves. Nevertheless, in natural attractions it is not to be compared with the majority of Euro-

pean bathing places. For that which it is, it has to thank above all else the hand of man. Indeed, when some curious groupings of rocks have been mentioned the list of its physical beauties is complete.

One of these rocky points—Cabo Corrientes—is well worth a visit. The formation here admits of deep, narrow clefts through which the waters of the breakers rush to a great distance. One may be seated upon the smooth surface of one of these seamed sets of rocks, apparently quite remote from the waves, when a faint hissing from beneath may tempt one to gaze down one of these splits in the rock, and there at the bottom, far below, is the water as it rushes, boiling and seething, the length of the chasm. Then the foamy streak has to retrace its way along the underground maze, until the next wave sends it forward once more to bore its passage inland. The spot is, perhaps, the most romantic in Mar del Plata. But—alas for its picturesque aspects!—the curse of modern enterprise is written largely upon it. For on these rocks as well as upon the majority of those in the neighbourhood are painted large, glaring letters and words that tell of someone's patent medicine, and of someone else's cigars!

Near by another rocky point, Punta Piedras, stands the shell of what was intended to be a large hotel. Of dull red stone, even as it is, empty, windowless, and with the birds building nests in its crevices, the building is an imposing one. It is of old standing now, and is a monument to an enterprise that was premature. But the town is creeping nearer to it each year, and it is not impossible at any time now that

this enormous structure may echo to the noises of the bustle and movement for which it was intended, but which it has never known.

In the neighbourhood of this forsaken edifice are the golf links, claimed to be the best in Argentina. The club house is situated on a hill which overlooks both the course and the ocean. The course, which contains some interesting holes, is well mowed and cared for, and is in all respects worthy of Mar del Plata—or, perhaps, from the member's point of view it should be said that the town is worthy of the links.

The Great Southern Railway supplies an excellent service of splendidly equipped trains to Mar del Plata. The journey has been accelerated, moreover, and the traveller can now leave Buenos Aires in the afternoon and arrive at the seaside town on the same night. The majority, however, prefer the night train. By this means, one may sleep in comfort, enjoy a bath and breakfast en route, and arrive at one's destination early the next morning, fit for the sands, pigeon-shooting, golf, or any other recreation.

Mar del Plata, incidentally, possesses its industrial side. The fisheries give employment to a number of men, and to watch the small craft at work when a heavy sea is running is to have some quite unexpected qualities of the mariner revealed in the Argentine. The method here of trawling by the edge of the sea is interesting to watch. One end of the net, attached to a horse upon which the fisherman rides, is dragged out to sea until the waters attain almost to the height of the horse's shoulder, when a course parallel with the shore is taken. At the other

end a second man moves forward at the edge of the waters in conjunction with the horse. Then, when sufficient ground has been covered, the latter describes a semi-circle towards the land, and the "catch," or want of it, is revealed. A speciality of Mar del Plata is its prawn, a great, stout, crustacean four or five times as large as the British variety, and of an exceedingly rich flavour. These, in the language of the cookery book, are "much esteemed," and find their way in quantities to the town of Buenos Aires.

This sea-side resort of Argentina is something of a port. It possesses, at least, a pier which juts out into the ocean, and by the side of which a steamer may occasionally be seen. The spot, however, is quite exposed, and it is usual for such vessels, even in calm weather, to resort to the open sea of a night.

The potato industry in the neighbourhood has assumed important proportions, the soil producing some of the finest specimens of the tuber in the Republic. But its reputation as a pleasure resort overshadows all else. There is more pride taken in the freshness of its atmosphere—that now and then demands an overcoat upon a summer's evening when Buenos Aires is glowing with heat—than in a hundred potato fields. And, considering that which they have contrived upon a somewhat slender natural foundation, the spot is one of which the Argentines may well be proud.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CAMP.

Its aspect—An ocean of land—The fascination of vastness—Squalls—The monotony of the land—A comparison between past and present—Camp timber—The Estanciero—The Mayor Domo.

The Camp is the mainspring of Argentine life. The palatial building of the millionaire and the mud hovel of the immigrant alike have to thank the rich soil for their foundation in every sense. It is upon this land that the Republic feeds. Its phases and its produce are watched with all the tender anxiety lavished upon an infant of rapid growth. But the chief sentiment which it inspires is that of confidence. For the Camp is a very big baby indeed.

Its aspects are characteristic of smooth, even, and almost endless prosperity. Speaking generally, the Camp is a vast plain. It is true that there are mountains and hills available for pasture in Patagonia, Cordoba, Mendoza, San Juan, and still further north. Nevertheless, the Camp itself, as generally understood, may be restricted in imagination to the flat lands which constitute ninety per cent. of the area that is suitable for both agriculture and pasture. It spreads its smooth surface for hundreds of miles on end, with no hillock higher than those which the ants have flung up, and no depression more marked than those which the cartwheels have ploughed to mar it. It is, in fact, an ocean of land stretching in sedate calmness from horizon to horizon.

Here and there, visible at a distance of many miles, stand out objects that rise as abruptly as islands from the sea. Seen from afar, the illusion is almost perfect, but a nearer approach reveals them to be natural and artificial sproutings from the earth—groves of trees, estancia houses, and large "galpons," as the sheds and warehouses are termed. At intervals between these prick upwards the long shafts of the windmill pumps, each topped by its circular fan. The lesser objects here have a curious fashion of disentangling themselves from their flat surroundings only at a comparatively short distance. As one rides along one may notice some dark lumps which much resemble smooth rocks. As one approaches them they take the shape of colonists' huts—humble erections of coal black mud. As likely as not their sombreness may be relieved by the flaming red or vivid blue of the dress of an Italian girl in its neighbourhood—a welcome bit of colour under the circumstances. As one gazes about, moving dust clouds are visible at various points of the level expanse. They are floating behind horses' hoofs or the wheels of a buggy in reality, but as a rule these latter are lost to sight in the distance. So far as the eye is concerned, the clouds move onwards just as smoke trails from a steamer. It may be said that all this metaphor of the ocean is far fetched. But what can one do when the very seagulls are deceived by the marine glamour of the spot? For they are here in their thousands. Innumerable flocks of them are circling in the air or settled upon the earth, though the nearest sea water is hundreds of miles distant.

CARTING TIMBER.

Facing Page 124.

There is a fascination in the very vastness of the Camp—in these leagues upon leagues of rich soil that spread themselves in readiness to receive the seed and to yield forth an abundant harvest. Upon it, too, one may witness the true life of Argentina as distinguished from the cosmopolitan existence that is led in the chief cities. That this life possesses its own peculiar charm is obvious from the mere reluctance of those who have adopted it to forsake it for another. Here, too, the Gaucho may be seen at work and play. From a romantic point of view he is not altogether the man he was, but he remains sufficiently picturesque in both phases, nevertheless. It is upon these plains, moreover, that one may watch the herds of cattle, the flocks of sheep, the yellow of the corn, and the vivid blue of the linseed flower. Intermixed with them is the green and russet of the maize, the purple of the alfalfa blossom, and the verdure of the natural Camp. The broad patches of these extend themselves in an apparently endless succession. And when the very heart of the lands has been attained to, one may scan the horizon north, south, east and west, and know that at every point that which lies beyond for hundreds of miles is exactly the same.

The Camp has its moods. In the spring, summer, and autumn it has its fill of sunshine—it knows no lack of it in winter, for the matter of that—but at any season of the year it is capable of transforming its aspects at the shortest notice. In the summer, for instance, the clouds may leap upwards out of the horizon with surprising suddenness to the accompaniment of distant thunder. Then after a while there

is a soughing, the noise of which approaches nearer and nearer from across the plain, until the wind strikes with a crash upon the estancia house, and whistles through the trees that surround it. Then will come the rain—huge drops that are sucked in greedily by the panting earth, while presently another windsquall may come howling over the wide expanse once again.

It is at such times that the Estanciero prays that there may be no flaw in the build and weighting of his stacks. For, if there be, their contents will be scattered far and wide ere the storm has blown itself out.

But in the ordinary course of events the atmosphere of the Camp in quiet and peaceful enough. It would seem, indeed, as a rule to repose in solemn stillness beneath the weight of the harvests it bears. The recent alterations in its appearance are almost as marked as those in the cities. Twenty years ago the Camp was almost innocent of threshing machines, and even in the neighbourhood of the towns it knew very little of the harrow and plough. The very network of fencing that now intersects it throughout was absent, and the private lands were separated the one from the other by geographical and visionary boundaries alone. The consequence, notwithstanding a system something after the fashion of the Australian "boundary riding," was the intermingling of such comparatively poor herds as then existed. This, in turn, was productive of occasional settlers' battles and boundary feuds in which the Gaucho found himself altogether in his element.

Indeed, had the latter been told a generation ago that the country over which he was wont to gallop to his heart's content would in times to come be neatly parcelled out into fields of maize and corn, and the grass itself be cut into small sections by the hated wire, he would in all probability have drawn his knife upon the traducing prophet in the easy fashion of his day.

All this has happened, nevertheless. Agriculture is spreading far and wide. Its eddies are welling ever outwards, driving the pastoralist pure and simple to seek fresh ground further and further afield. The remoter and more recently developed lands are known as the Outer Camps, the districts of older standing as the Inner Camps. It is sufficiently easy to distinguish between the two. If the island-like belts of trees, the tall pump shafts, and the squat colonists' houses dot the landscape amidst the maize, wheat, or ploughed land, it is the Inner Camp. If the grass and alfalfa stretch, marked only by thin fence lines, in a single great sweep to the horizon, it is the Outer Camp.

These broad lands of Argentina exercise their own fascination, as has been said. But in a newcomer, ere he knows them well, they may be productive of a certain sense of irritation. He may ride for league after league wondering when that change of scenery which his experience of other countries leads him to believe inevitable will occur. He may start from the centre of the land, and ride eastwards to the water's edge at Buenos Aires, and only discover at sight of the muddy La Plata that not a mile of the whole

[illegible] differs from the rest—if he excepts s[illegible] and small inland lakes whose waters lie pra[illegible] a level with the surrounding land. The [illegible] the rain would seem to follow the s[illegible] nature, and is alike to the same depth through[illegible] It is by reason of this very sameness that it is so [illegible] to the eye in the Camp. The process is nei[illegible] as it might be the case [illegible] in wilder nature. The fact remains, ne[illegible] that a town-bred man may easily be unable to [illegible] the homestead from which he started ou[illegible] the horizon stands a timber which stand out u[illegible] the horizon, and the orange counterpart of the ot[illegible]

It must be borne in mind that the Camp in [illegible] state was far less broken in its aspect t[illegible] is the case now. With the exception of [illegible] and the ombu tree—a few specimens of which [illegible] be seen in groups of many miles—the plain [illegible] was not interrupted by any forest [illegible] The ombu is not sufficient alone to work u[illegible] the [illegible] which knew no shade, except [illegible] and that of the tall this[illegible] which [illegible] But the hand of man has c[illegible] to the face of nature somewhat desolate in [illegible] respect. It has brought the willow, eucalyp[illegible] poplar and pampas grass, and spread them in gro[illegible] over the land. Facts of such transformations, h[illegible] ever, and of causes and effects in general, will [illegible] dealt with later. The present is merely an attemp[illegible] depict the aspects as they first present themselve[illegible] the lands which have made, and are still making, [illegible] fortunes of so many.

OX WAGONS.

The most important of the large army of Camp-dwellers are, of course, the Estancieros. The position of an Estanciero is equivalent to that held by those who in our own language answer to the varying terms of gentleman-farmer, station owner, or squatter, in accordance with the country of their profession. But as the life of each of these differs slightly from that of the other two, so the circumstances of the Estanciero differ from them all. If an Englishman—and it is with such that I intend principally to deal at the moment—he has, of course, to adapt himself to a language other than his own, and to the control of men whose nature and habits are widely distinguished from those of a similar class whom he has been accustomed to meet at home. It is a matter of extreme importance that he should cultivate an understanding of these latter and their ways. Indeed, it may be said that in Argentina it is the appreciation or dislike of himself which he contrives to instil into his employés which goes far either to make or mar his career as an Estanciero.

Compared with that of his brethren in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, the life of an ordinarily well-to-do Estanciero is a luxurious one. Manual labour, as a general rule, is a phase of which he knows nothing. The loss of dignity which this proceeding would procure him in the eyes of his "peons" forbids it even had he the mind to indulge in it. Supervision is the duty which falls to his lot. As the Argentines have it:— "El ojo del dueño engorda el buey"—the eye of the master fattens the ox. Still, providing he has a reliable "capataz"

at the head of each set of men, there is no reason why he should make heavy weather of this. The Estancia hands—the "peons"—or, at all events, the older fashioned section of them—are wont to take the interests of a favourite "patron" much to heart. In which case they will possess a considerable sense of the responsibility attaching to their tasks, and they may be left to their labours in the full confidence that, though their judgment may prove at fault, the energy of their work will continue the same throughout.

The Estanciero's life, moreover, is usually set in pleasant lines so far as the creature well being is concerned. The standard of comforts is higher in the Camp than in the majority of lands of colonisation. His house is wont to be well built and roomy, and his garden will produce in abundance almost any vegetable, fruit, or flowers that he cares to plant in it. In the Inner Camps an ice-box is by no means a rare item of the summer furniture, and it is seldom that it remains unstocked, though the ice may have to travel far from its factory. For recreation he will have shooting, and, should his district be at all populous, polo and periodical race meetings of the impromptu order. In addition to these, there is the possibility of golf, and the certainty of the all-pervading "bridge."

Perhaps the era of prosperity which now prevails may be termed scarcely a just one by which to judge the Estanciero's mode of life. It is true that probably never in his existence has he been so well off as at the present moment. At the same time it is

a little difficult to gather that his habits during gloomier times were ever much other than they are now. For one thing the system of credit has always held good in the land itself, and in the past this has been found capable of considerable stretching in many instances without the disastrous results which might reasonably have been expected. The Estanciero has his own views upon Camp life, and he believes in the employment of whatever compensations are possible for the comparative seclusion of his existence. None can blame him for that.

As in other countries, there are many landowners who, leaving their estates under management, reside there for only certain periods of the year. But the duties of an owner in themselves provide a pleasant enough occupation for the average Estanciero. It is no bad morning's amusement to canter over the grass and through the alfalfa from well to well, and to inspect the herds of Durham, Hereford, or whatever cattle may be congregated about each tank and pond. Then there are the sheep to be seen to, and one may ride along the edges of the squares of tall maize and wheat to mark their progress. After that will follow a stroll, and a lengthy cogitation of the merits of the fine stock that feed lazily in their sheltered stalls. Upon a balmy morning, and at a season when live stock and cereals have each "profitable" written large across them, there are worse occupations than this. If more violent exercise is desired, the opportunity is always at hand. He may go out and help his men at the Rodeo (cattle mustering), and indulge in hard galloping, twisting and turning

to his heart's content. It is worth while being an Estanciero, but—one has to get there first!

He has his worries, of course. Should he have rented a portion of his land to colonists, as is usual, it is possible that he may find his time filled sufficiently to exclude his peace of mind. For the colonist, like so many tenant farmers, is apt, if necessary, to look upon his landlord as his father and mother of finance. He may be cursed with incapable "capatazes" and bad specimens of peons. He has two enemies, moreover, which he dreads, the first, drought, the second and even more baneful of the two, locusts. But these are worthy of a chapter to themselves.

The hospitality of the Estanciero is as proverbial as that of our run-holders of Australia and New Zealand. In one sense he has less to gain from the exercise of this virtue than the squatters of the back-blocks. In the Inner Camp at all events, thanks to the magnificent service of railways, it is seldom that he need suffer from the ennui of loneliness. Without these railways his plight would be a very different one. As it is, he possesses a simple remedy for the slack times that are unenlivened by the presence of guests. He may drive a few leagues to the station, board the train, dine as well as in any hotel, sleep in a comfortable bunk, and find himself in the morning within the vortex of Buenos Aires.

Britain is represented in Estancieros to a far greater extent than any other nation, with the exception, of course, of Argentina itself. The Germans, however, are now taking up land to an important

extent. Beyond these, nearly every nationality supplies a number to the profession. In the main the representatives of these various countries, with a common object in view, pull together remarkably well.

The Mayor Domo plays an important part in the affairs of the Camp. As manager, or rather as under-manager to a resident Estanciero, he relieves the latter of much of the hum-drum portion of the work—if the active superintendence of cattle work, harvesting, and the like can be known by such a term. It is his duty, moreover, to keep the books, pay the men, and attend to the thousand and one calls which the manipulation of a large property of the kind entails.

Before he attains to this position it is necessary for him not only to have spent some time in the country; he must also have passed a considerable period upon the land itself in order that he may have become conversant with the methods of the work and the habits of the peons as well as with the language. His life is agreeable enough, if strenuous. Compared with many a manager in the back blocks of New Zealand, the Mayor Domo is in clover. The former, for instance, as often as not, will know nothing of bread, milk or vegetables. He will "do for himself" as best he can at the end of the hard day's work, for the simple reason that there is seldom any one else to turn a hand to his aid. So his fare not infrequently will consist of cold meat, flavoured by milkless tea and ship's biscuits, and this without a break for day after day. In many respects the Mayor Domo is more fortunate. He has his

moments of discomfort, of course, and his hours of early rising and of hard riding beneath a blazing sun, but he will at all events find his meals awaiting him in readiness upon his return, and servants at hand to attend to his bodily comforts. And this is a condition of affairs which is not always appreciated to the full by those who have experienced no taste of the far rougher life that the backwoods of a British Colony involve.

Not that the Mayor Domo's life is necessarily an ideal one. In many instances it is exactly the reverse. The general well-being or discomfort of his existence depends largely upon the individuality of his employer as well as upon the extent of his salary. The latter as a rule is a very small one for so wealthy a country as Argentina. There are instances, indeed, where the Mayor Domo's salary does not exceed thirty or forty pounds per annum—not a very large sum for one who is usually expected to have received a gentleman's education, and to mix with the family and guests of the "patron." There are not many, however, who are remunerated on so low a scale as this, and it must be remembered that, with everything "found" upon the place, such small salary as he receives amounts practically to pocket money. He must, of course, forego the idea of any regularity in his trips to Buenos Aires or elsewhere, even if his income attain to the comparatively large amount of one or two hundred pounds per annum. But then the post is—or is supposed and hoped to be—merely a temporary one in the life of a Camp man. It represents a state of transition during which

the aspirant to higher honours is approaching more remunerative and responsible office. As a matter of fact, that of Mayor Domo is a young man's billet. Should one observe an elderly or middle-aged man filling it, one will know him for what he is—one of the numerous and pathetic cases of failure.

I have said that the Mayor Domo does not indulge in regular jaunts to the metropolis. There is one period, nevertheless, that of the cattle-show week, when one will find him there almost to a certainty. It is upon this occasion that the Camp pours its members—Estancieros and subordinates of all kinds—in shoals into the town. It is a holiday, a "fiesta" for one and all.

At that period the hotels of Buenos Aires are filled to overflowing with bronzed men from the country. To mark that the occasion is no ordinary one they have brought with them the free atmosphere of the Camp in strong gusts—perhaps rather more of it that actually exists outside. Camp men indulge in considerable *esprit de corps*. They are wont to hang together even when their numbers in town are small. But when they are assembled in their hundreds the pride and joy of the meeting is apt to upset the equilibrum of the younger members. There are scenes of powerful revelry, and it is not an unknown thing for the morning sunlight to reveal the furniture of that celebrated bachelor establishment, the Universelle, in a fragmentary condition. The proceedings are nothing beyond a quite healthful explosion of natural steam. But the more timid residents of the city are wont to breathe a little more freely when the ceremony it as at end for all that.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GAUCHO.

His past—Influences at work—Their results—Costumes and ornamentations—The "machete"—Horsegear and horsemanship—His humours—Some bad specimens of the class—The lust of revenge—The Gaucho in lighter vein—As an invalid—As a striker.

The Gaucho represents, par excellence, the central figure of the Camp. It is this picturesque mortal that the broad plains have to thank for such romance and local colour as is vested in them. He has given to the Camp its songs and its tales of adventure. He has loved and fought upon it for generations before its sod was first turned by the plough. In the days when local warfare was far more irregular than it is now, he has flocked in hundreds to join some standard or other—it did not much matter which—on countless occasions. His very illogicalness was heroic. In feud or in civil war the cause he fought for was victory. Any reason beyond this was wont to be unasked and unknown. In the Indians that used to swarm upon the land he found an ever ready and willing enemy. In the later battles of what might be termed Argentina's mediæval period, he would occasionally hold aloof until it became evident which side fortune was favouring. He would then join in the fray to complete a half-won victory—not from any motives of cowardice, but merely because he chanced to be in a mood to

appreciate the true profitableness of warfare. The Camp rings with his misdeeds as well as those others which savour of true nobility. Without him Argentina's plains would be as characterless in legend as Rob Roy's country had it never known a kilt.

Civilisation is as remorseless in obliteration as it is fruitful in progress. Counted in actual decades, the period may be short, but it is a far cry from the days of the trackless Pampas to a land whose atmosphere vibrates to the sound of agricultural machinery. The Gaucho has not altogether escaped from the universal condition of metamorphosis. There are some who will even assert that the true Gaucho is a being of whom one will see very few specimens in a long day's ride, that intermarriage with immigrants and other causes have all but wiped out the original breed. But this is true only in part. It is a fact that the habits of the Gaucho are changing, but he has by no means been eliminated for all that.

The greatest enemy of the old-time Gaucho was undoubtedly that very railway system which bids fair to prove of the greatest benefit to his descendants. As an agent of civilisation it has found no rival in Argentina. It is difficult to pick a quarrel with an iron horse that goes thundering past—difficult, at least, with any satisfaction to the aggressor. It is scarcely more feasible to indulge in a duel in old-time style with the slashing "machetes," when the long, disconcerting string of freight-cars goes lumbering by in the vicinity with such a prosaic clatter.

The Gaucho has lost—almost, but not altogether—

the romance of his combats, of his wilder amours, and of those "bailes" (dances) of his, which, once witnessed, are never forgotten. In return he has gained the solidity which a settled occupation and regular wages imbue. He is being educated, moreover—vicariously, by means of his children, so far. But the process has commenced, and the results of such an institution are likely to progress at snowball speed.

But it must not be imagined that this child of the plains has sacrificed his individuality to any serious extent. To commence with the outward and more obvious side of him, this is still sufficiently striking. Indeed, his costume is characteristic to a degree. A broad sombrero, a shirt, bombachos—wide Turkish trousers that range in colour from black to snow-white, and that fall to just above the ankle, where they are enclosed in a pair of tight-fitting boots—this is the everyday working costume of the Gaucho. There are variations of the style in abundance. Then, moreover, for cooler weather, and for use in travelling, there is that most important garment of all, the Poncho. The ordinary Poncho is formed of an expanse of blanket-like cloth with an aperture in the centre, through which the head is thrust. The garment falls downwards from the shoulders in most graceful folds about the figure, whether the latter be on horseback or on foot. The shades of these Ponchos vary from the sadder-coloured tints to the boldest hues. In the out-of-the-way districts one may still see an occasional one or two of these of a plush-like material of brilliant purple or scarlet. The

effect of an apparition on horseback thus swathed is not a little gorgeous. It is in the remoter districts of the kind, too, that one may yet see the enormous spurs that once were wont to be the pride of every true Gaucho. Rounded, and almost plate-like in size as they are, they necessitate a boot with a heel inches in height in order to permit the wearer to walk at all. But awkwardness in walking concerns the Gaucho little, providing the effect upon horseback comes up to his own peculiar standard.

The broad belt of this picturesque Argentine lends itself, moreover, to many fantastic and effective patterns. It is in this that is stuck the "machete" (knife) of such ominous appearance. The great blade, occasionally a foot and more in length, is encased in a leathern, and, more rarely, in a metal scabbard. It is worn somewhat after the fashion that the short Japanese sword was wont to be carried—but at the back instead of the front. The wearing of this knife is still general, although the instrument itself has tended to diminish in size. Its purposes, too, are more purely utilitarian than formerly. Nevertheless, its owner has not yet altogether lost to mind the lethal properties of his weapon, and it is well, in the course of a possible heated argument with one of them, to remember this fact.

A smart Gaucho in poncho, bombachos, and with the large spurs at his heels, is a sight worth seeing as he sits across his saddle, inlaid and ornamented with silver. There is scope for individuality, moreover, in nearly every portion of the gear. The stirrups, for instance, have a far wider scope of

pattern than those in use amongst Northern races. They may be of leather—a flat round disc with a hole in the centre, through which the toe is passed, or they may be shaped of the same material in the form of a heel-less sabot which admits of almost the entire foot. But the variety of these patterns of stirrups is too great to admit of their enumeration here. Ranging from the most fantastic conception to a plain iron ring, they would afford an interesting field to a collector of such articles.

If a Gaucho embarks upon a journey which is likely to endure for several days, his saddle will consist of little beyond a roll or two of blanket secured to his horse's back by girth, surcingle, or both. By these extremely practical means he carries his household furniture about with him wherever he goes, for when the animal is unsaddled of a night the blankets become its rider's couch.

Lithe and graceful in every movement as he is, the Gaucho is a consummate horseman. From his earliest days he has known, if not the saddle, at all events the horse's back. At an age when the majority of other children would scarcely be able to do more than toddle, he will succeed in mounting a quiet pony, provided he can secure a grip of the mane. This once grasped, he will clamber up, using a front leg of the animal to aid him much as a sailor "shins up" a mast.

These youngsters are precocious to a degree in their dealings with horseflesh. I have seen a child who could certainly have seen no more than six

summers, shot to the ground from the back of a shying pony. One might have expected a fit of howling, but the child was none the worse. For all that, he was intensely angry. After belabouring the pony with his puny fists in the most businesslike style, he accomplished the lengthy business of remounting with utter unconcern, and started off at a gallop. Caution or fear in the management of horses is utterly unknown to the Gaucho, young or old. Such sentiments as these are altogether incomprehensible to him. For this reason he experiences a contempt which he takes little trouble to disguise for those who sit, uneasy and diffident, in the saddle. But his heart will go out to the stranger who will ride a bucking horse without blenching, and in his own fashion he will transfer to him the freedom of the plains.

To those who do not know him, he may appear to err, at the first glimpse, on the side of gloomy silence. As a matter of fact, he possesses upon occasion something of that taciturnity which would seem the portion of the majority of those whose lives are passed amongst horses. He has, moreover, a very proper sense of his own dignity. He will resent and ignore any attempts at patronage or "chaff" on the part of a newcomer, whose claims to such freedom he has not yet settled in his own mind. Those who are placed above him, and who understand him best, know that he is to be ridden on the snaffle, never on the curb. Any attempt to drive the Gaucho by hectoring measures will certainly produce undesirable results. He may merely betake himself elsewhere,

or he may add to the inconvenience by inducing his chosen comrades amongst the hands to accompany him in his exit. He may store up the insult in his mind with a view to its certain wiping out later, or, if deeper bitterness be involved, it is even possible that he may try immediate conclusions with that knife of his. A blustering tone of reprimand is wont to act upon his temperament as red rag to a bull. His own speech is soft and low, and he likes to be addressed in similar fashion. His features, with the exception of the eyes, are curiously immobile, and his gestures few. But there is a volcano only just beneath that smooth surface mask. He is a queer mixture of devotion and hatred, jest and earnest. Those whom he likes, he will serve with unsurpassed faithfulness, which is frequently all the more admirable for its disinterestedness. He is still sufficiently a child of nature to ignore the value of money for its own sake, and is apt to refuse with scorn an offer of higher wages which would remove him from an estancia where he finds himself at home.

The average Estanciero—and he should know—is given to declare that the Gaucho is the easiest man in the world with whom to live in peace and concord—so far as relations between employer and employed are concerned. The main thing is to permit him freedom in the exercise of his proper pride—of which commodity he is wont to carry an extremely full cargo. Should he show a tendency to become slack the best method is to twit him gently with the better progress which his comrades have made. A few remarks of this order, and a few expressions of mild

amazement at his failure, will spur him to efforts that no censure could ever bring about.

It might be imagined from all this that owners of estancias and managers are wont to go somewhat in fear of their picturesque "peons." But this, as a general rule, is by no means the case. Nor does the element of temporising enter into the matter. The fact is simply that the Gaucho has always been accustomed to treatment of the kind, and has not learned to submit to any other.

In view of his temperament, it is not surprising that a bad specimen of the class should usually prove an out and out desperado. There are some amongst them—their number is fortunately diminishing—who, had they their own way, would mark each real or fancied rebuff by a knife stroke. Though the majority of the breed are of intensely sober habits, should the fumes of liquor chance to mount within them, they find a half-lit fire already, that only awaits their advent to burst into full blaze. And when the spirit has risen to the cracked pates of the desperado element they become irresponsible to a dangerous degree.

An Estanciero or manager who employs labour largely usually makes it a rule to avoid the interior of "pulperias"—country inns—in his own neighbourhood, at all events. The precaution is a wise one, for should a recently dismissed "peon" of the vindictive order who has been indulging unwisely chance to be among the company, he will in all probability endeavour to make matters unpleasant for his late employer. In such a case there is one axiom

in camp life which is most urgently impressed upon the newcomer. That is—never draw a revolver unless it is intended to be used. The sight of the weapon does not in the least cow a Gaucho whose mood is threatening. Though it may stop him for a moment, the drawing of the weapon upon him merely dissipates any possible hesitancy on his part concerning an ultimate attack. The advice of the experienced is —draw only when you must, but shoot the moment you draw.

The devotion of the average Gaucho to his employer is very real, for all this. There are countless instances when a second "peon" has flung himself between the latter and one of these vindictive spirits, occasionally at the cost of his own life. As a rule, moreover, the native "Capataz" is the one who bears the brunt of any contretemps upon an estancia. It is seldom that this latter shirks the taking of an explosion of wrath upon his own shoulders—an act of unconscious nobility when the smallness of his pay is taken into consideration.

In financial matters the Gaucho's honesty is proverbial. As a matter of fact, he does not trouble his head overmuch about them. But he will never forget a financial wrong, for all that. Almost every crime that the Gaucho has been known to commit, has for its motive sudden passion or a lust for revenge. It cannot be too strongly impressed that the true Gaucho never stoops to violence for the sake of pecuniary gain. In the old days, there was marauding on the part of his race, as well as on that of the hostile Indians. But highway robbery for mean and sordid

ıas never been a real feature of the Argentine
ılthough in its former wild and lonely state
scarcely imagine a more favourable field for
ıtionable sport. At the same time, many of
ıo have deliberately swindled the Gaucho
ı made to pay for it—with ghastly interest—
ıg run.

stance of this occurred in the province of
; not so very long ago. Here there was a
rested in the land—his name and nationality
be given—who possessed an unfortunate
for getting the better of his neighbours,
s of the means employed. Had he been
ɔ continue the exercise of this weakness upon
ıintances among the Estancieros, managers,
ike, all would have been comparatively well.
ents no tragedy would have ensued. But in
moment he fell foul of one of his own
nd unfortunately there could be no doubt
he had done the man out of his just dues.
ı left, taking a solemn vow that he would
ed. The interval was short ere his purpose
ɔmplished. He met the other, alone in a
driving in the direction of the small town-
ɔrcing his horse against the side of the cart,
g within it, and in a second had slit his
throat from ear to ear. And the reason
—in dollars—was pitifully insignificant.

planation of so many of these deeds is that
:ho regards the avenging of a wrong as a
honour. But it must not be imagined from
ıat the Camp is a spot whose dwellers carry

their lives in their hands. Outrages of the kind occur in sufficient numbers nearer home, but they lack the fulness of the dramatic setting and element which renders their occasional occurrence so noticeable in Argentina. To one who deals with the man of the plains in a reasonable spirit and in a manner which is "simpatico," there is no more likelihood of the happening of unpleasantness than in any other part of the world. On the contrary, the Gaucho will stick to him through thick and thin, in frequent disregard of his own interests.

To a "patron" who studies his welfare at all, he will exhibit the lighter side of his temperament. For, although the trait is not immediately obvious, he possesses this in no small degree. He can observe the ridiculous in other people as keenly as anybody else, and his sense of humour, though frequently repressed, is by no means deficient. There is at least one Capataz in Buenos Aires Province whose reputation as a wag is considerable. The one I have in mind was wont to expend a portion of his humour upon the nomenclature of horses. He had christened a wizened white horse "Gin" for the reason that, though it looked weak as water, it was in reality far stronger. A showy, high-paced animal he had named "Papelito"—Passport. The cause of this cryptic appellation lay in the fact that the gait of the animal had suggested to his mind the "swagger" of the Englishmen and other foreigners who, protected by passport, strolled about, free and unmolested, on those days when the Argentine was impressed for a turn at his military duties.

In those moments when his dignity has relaxed somewhat, the Gaucho has been known to indulge in a practical joke or two, more especially in matters connected with horseflesh. But the habit is by no means general with him. Unless one is intimate with the particular workings of his character, it is wiser to attempt no witticism of the kind upon him. He is wont to be sensitive, moreover, concerning a "tip," if offered by a stranger. In return for a service rendered, he will accept a cigarette or two with the utmost readiness and courtesy. But the proffer of money in an off-hand fashion he will probably refuse with a gesture of sufficient eloquence to cause his would-be benefactor to feel extremely small.

In his leisure hours he is occasionally addicted to the guitar. When in search of more strenuous exercise, he will match his horse against that of a companion, while, as a medium between the two amusements, he will indulge in bowls. The ethics of this game as he plays it, are similar to those which prevail in England. The difference lies in the method of propelling the ball. According to Argentine rules, the ball is tossed in the air, not rolled, which makes the game none the easier. In more populous districts it is just possible that a Pelota Court may exist in the neighbourhood. In which case he may from time to time take a hand in the game. But such regular practice as is carried on at this is limited to persons of greater social importance than he.

The Gaucho is imbued with at least his share of

that spirit of gambling which pervades Argentina in general. He dices—with the knee bone of an ox. The fragment of the animal is tossed aloft in the air. If the hollow side fall uppermost, the thrower wins, if the contrary result, he loses. The game is known as "Taba"—which, as a matter of fact, is the translation of knee bone. It is played with the utmost enthusiasm, and many a slaughtered animal has taken posthumous revenge upon its slayer by means of this relic of itself.

In his character of parent, the Gaucho is sufficiently affectionate, if somewhat casual-minded, and his children enjoy a liberty similar to that which those of the wealthier Argentines know. His methods of coping with illness are benighted in the extreme. The whole family, together with every available friend that can be collected, are in the habit of crowding themselves within a room where lies a sick child. Here they will weep *à pleine coeur*, and succeed in shutting out such little air as was originally afforded the sufferer.

Should a medical man be in attendance, his lot is certain to be no happy one. Although his suggestions as to sanitation are almost invariably ignored, the death of the sufferer will certainly be laid at the doctor's door. Fortunately for the medical faculty, the relations of the deceased are sufficiently generous to impute mere ignorance rather than malicious intent to the doctor. And so no feud follows.

That the Gaucho is still profoundly ignorant of the significance of many of the implements and methods of civilisation is instanced by the following. It hap-

HERD OF POLLED ANGUS CATTLE.

POLLED ANGUS BULL.

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pened that three of a peon's fingers were blown away by the explosion of a gun. The man suffered the incident with extreme coolness, and, being one of the sturdiest of his kind, it is probable that of his own accord he would have thought little more of the matter. His employer, however, sent a number of leagues in search of the nearest doctor, who, upon his arrival, bandaged the unfortunate man's hand, and prescribed a sleeping draught to be taken at nine o'clock in the evening. A recent comer to the camp, he was in ignorance of the fact that the Gaucho's roosting hour in winter ante-dated that time by a considerable while.

The sequel to this would almost persuade one that this particular Gaucho had hailed from Erin's Isle. It was a couple of days later that he begged his employer for the loan of that alarum clock of whose powers he had heard so much. Upon interrogation, the reason for this request was divulged. On the two previous nights, he, having turned into the blankets at seven, had had the misfortune to sleep straight through until the following morning, and thus had missed the sleeping draught. But, with the aid of the alarm, he hoped to wake that night at nine, and then all would be well! As may be imagined from this, Gaucho notions of doctoring are crude to a degree. A comforting element of superstition enters into these at times. There are numbers amongst the race who profess to effect cures by means of tokens and spells. These magic methods are as efficient in the case of cattle as in that of human beings, and results are pointed to that are in every way as suc-

cessful as those claimed for patent medicines at home.

The benefits of civilisation upon the younger generation are not altogether unmixed. Estancieros complain that this latest product of all is neither so good a rider, so able a stockman, nor so handy a being as were his parents. The years of faithful service with which an old-fashioned peon was wont to recompense an esteemed "patron" are more rarely to be expected from the present generation. Modern inventions have made less arduous work, less strenuous men. Though he rides hard, it is not quite the riding of his fathers; his lasso swings with a little less certainty, and—most astounding of all—he is beginning to manifest his grievances by means of strikes! This is a proceeding at which the soul of the old-time Gaucho would have revolted. Sooner than incur the disgrace of such a tame combat, he would have sought his end at the point of his slighted knife.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE GAUCHO AS STOCKMAN.

The "Rodeo"—Some exciting duties—Counting cattle and "parting"—The "brete" system—Argentines versus Texan Cowboys—Results of a competition—Varying methods—The advantages of a stock whip—The Gaucho and refractory cattle.

The work of the gaucho lies almost altogether among the livestock. Agricultural labour is not his strong point, this branch of estancia life being left in the hands of the Italian and other foreign colonists. The nature of the cattle work is similar to that in other stock-raising countries. The "mustering" of the animals, however, is conducted in a fashion characteristic of the country. The herds are driven together at a certain point in the estancia, usually marked by a large, upright post. After a short while they learn the significance of this latter. When they find the Gauchos riding out in their midst they know well enough what is intended, and are wont to plod along steadily in the desired direction.

A "Rodeo," as it is termed, is a sight worth seeing when at its height, more especially when its units run to thousands, as is frequently the case. Viewed from a distance, one may notice a line strongly marked upon the level of the Camp—a line that lengthens and contracts a little from time to time, and that would seem to writhe and heave curiously. Above it hangs a dust cloud of a magnitude that renders it visible for leagues.

At a nearer approach the sight becomes more and more imposing. The line has resolved itself into a broad mass of red, white, dun and other colours. Above this are sheafs and forests of horns, which bend and sway like branches in the wind. The cattle are wheeling round and round with the post in the centre as a pivot. They come by in rank after rank, column after column. Upon the outskirts, the forms of the mounted Gauchos stand out above the rows of moving backs. They resemble officers placed about a huge army.

If the cattle stay their monotonous tramping for a moment they are urged on once again. For this circular perambulation is just sufficient to keep their dull brains occupied. Without it they would grow uneasy, impatient, and take to bolting. As it is, now a single one, and now a group of three or four, will dart outwards in rebellion from time to time. But a hawk-like peon sends his horse at a gallop to meet these almost as soon as they have started out. He whirls and circles with the truant until the latter, checked, is obliged to rejoin the main body. But if the sight of this huge mass of animals be an imposing one, what of the sound? There are thousands of head of cattle in a bunch, and each of them has something to say. It is a sea—a very ocean of sound—nothing less would describe it. There comes wave upon wave, billow upon billow of hoarse bellowing roars that rise and fall in volume, but never entirely die away. At times the din sinks sufficiently to permit the rumbling of the heavy hoofs, and the occasional clash of horn against horn to be heard.

But the next moment the brazen throats will have been reinforced in numbers, and nothing beyond the all-deadening bellows sounds once again.

When, the inspection at an end, the watchful Gauchos have departed, the mass of animals will commence to break outwards, gradually at first, like a river that overflows its banks. The solidity of the gathering dissolves itself. Hundreds, tens, and units stride stolidly towards every point of the compass. In the end, the post alone remains to mark where the "Rodeo" was held. But there is a broad circle about it, innocent of a single blade of grass, worn smooth as the surface of a town roadway, that testifies to the power of the hoofs that have tramped around the trysting place.

If the "Rodeo" has been summoned for the purpose of taking a count of the cattle, the operations are yet more interesting to watch. While a number of men surround the army of animals in order to keep it intact, others form up in two rows at a point in the outskirts of the circle, forming thus a gangway which leads directly from it. The cattle are driven outwards through this lane of horses and men, and are counted as they emerge. The operation sounds simple enough. In practice, however, the display of skill that is called into action is consummate. If one imagines this hedge of mounted men lined up at the fringe of a forest of horns whose owners stampede to break through from time to time, one may picture some lively scenes—more especially when the nerves of the horses tend to give way. But the lane of men,

though it may swerve and be crumpled in at odd moments, remains.

The operation of "parting" is yet more complicated, for here the main body is separated into two or more herds, and each animal as it arrives at the point of exit is driven to right or left in accordance with its classification. The proceedings somewhat resemble bovine lancers, performed by cumbrous, riotous, and unwilling dancers. This system of "parting" with all its attendant pandemonium, is time-honoured in the Camp; nevertheless, its last days are at hand. The Australian system, less picturesque, but more practical, has already come into vogue—to stay.

In this the animals are driven within a stockyard beyond which is a "race"—a narrow passage which will permit no two animals to enter it abreast. At the end of it is a gate, so constructed that it controls the entrance to a yard on the right hand and one on the left. By this means the closing of one exit automatically frees the other, and the animal has no initiative but to lumber onwards into that yard which is desired. This "brete," or draughting gate, is a great economiser of labour and of time. Indeed, it is to the Gaucho much that which ships without sails represent to the seaman.

To Argentine Estancieros this innovation is doubly welcome in view of the high standard to which the quality of the stock is attaining. A troop of the highest class animals may be sent through the "brete" with practically no possibility of injury to any of their number. But the Gaucho himself has

toned down the vigour of his dealings with the cattle in accordance with their increase in value. He "works" them with a light enough hand in these days. The long lasso is wont to be sparingly and carefully used, and a system of gentle handling is the order of the day.

This was instanced in a competition between a company of Texan cowboys and a number of peons, which took place just outside the town of Buenos Aires in January, 1906. In the matter of pure display and dash—so far as "cattle punching" was concerned—it must be admitted that the Argentines were completely outclassed.

The performance of the cowboys was striking. When a steer had been let loose, and one of these had worked his will upon the animal, the result could not fail to elicit admiration for the man's skill. Galloping alongside the animal as it sped forward, he would cast his short lasso with unerring aim. Then, he would either wait with his horse braced to meet the shock, or he would essay a feat of a more daring order. In this case he would ride by the side of the lassoed animal for a short while, then he would dash away from it at right angles. Thus, with the horse going at full gallop, the shock lit upon the steer with terrific violence. In a flash its four legs would be pointing upwards to the sky. The next second it would be turning helpless somersaults upon the ground, for all the world like a shot rabbit. Even when at length it lay, disentangled from its own limbs, as it were, and stretched out upon the ground, its compulsory progress had not ceased. For the

impetus of the galloping horse was such that the steer was dragged along in its wake, until the rider chose to halt.

At the end of it, when the animal lay stunned, it was the work of but a second or two for the cowboy to fling himself to the ground and to "rope" the steer's legs, the speed with which the operation was effected from start to finish being the test of the competition. As a feat of nerve and horsemanship, the sight was unrivalled. It was, indeed, a stirring one—for all but the steer. The result, so far as these poor creatures were concerned, was, as often as not, a horn wrenched off, or a broken limb. In some cases their life had to be made an end to, in order to spare them further agony.

In comparison with this, the Argentine made a poor display from a theatrical point of view. Starting out when his turn came with the far longer length of lasso which he is wont to employ, he would cast from a much greater distance than the other. His rope, in consequence, would occasionally miss its object altogether at the first attempt, and, when successful, it frequently failed to bring the animal to the ground.

It was a comparison of two styles of stockriding in which from the point of view of rapidity the Argentine was bound to suffer. But though the time he took was longer, the animals handled by him showed no signs of injury whatever. Moreover, magnificent though the performance of the Cowboys was, there are not many Estancieros who would have cared to entrust their fine stock to the mercies of the Texans, as exemplified in this competition.

MENDOZA—CALLE SAN MARTIN.

MENDOZA—PLAZA INDEPENDENCIA.

MENDOZA—APPROACH TO RAILWAY STATION.

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As roughriders and sitters of bucking horses, neither side was able to secure any advantage over the other. There was apparently not a "bucker" in the entire Republic capable of unseating any one out of the whole number of competitors. The general results of this competition, it may be said, were distinctly beneficial. For one thing, it awoke the Gaucho to the fact that there were others in the world who could ride and handle stock as well as himself—a possibility that he had found some difficulty in crediting until then.

In his handling of live-stock the Argentine is wont to dispense entirely with that most useful instrument, the stock-whip. As what might be termed persuaders of propulsion they use nothing beyond the lasso rope and the short rebenque—riding whip—which is really suitable for nothing beyond their own mounts. The peon, when asked the reason for this omission, is a little apt to reply that he has never been accustomed to anything else—neither was his father, nor his grandfatner. Yet I have frequently seen Gauchos in trouble with refractory cattle that would have been obviated by the not necessarily brutal use of the twelve-foot raw hide lash.

An Estanciero or two has endeavoured to introduce it, but with ill success. Had the Gaucho the opportunity of witnessing the moral power of the weapon that is used in Australia and New Zealand, one cannot help thinking that his views would suffer a rapid and radical change. Once bitten by the stock-whip, the most rampageous cattle beast is wont to

bear the occurrence in mind, and it will have to be a very disturbed animal indeed that will attempt to dash past the spot where the thongs are cracking like pistol shots. Thus the power of its influence becomes moral rather than brutal. With this in employment, there would be little further chance of horned termagents breaking back and boring directly through the line of those who would intercept them as I have frequently seen to be the case in Argentina.

The Gaucho, on the other hand, has a method of dealing with mutinous cattle which is altogether admirable. Two men, however, are required for its performance. If an animal persists in going the way it should not, a rider closes in on either hand until the flanks of the horses are just in touch with those of the rebel. Thus with the latter hemmed in, the trio of animals and the two riders scamper along, and the creature in the centre is guided in whichever direction is required. The aspect of this hustling procession is sufficiently quaint. To all appearances the prisoner in the centre is quite helpless. It never seems to occur to the animal that a dead stop on its part might possibly extricate it from its position. It speeds along, hoping, perhaps, to outpace the horse that hangs like glue on either flank. But this feat it never accomplishes.

Argentine cattle, as a rule, however, are by no means of so wild a disposition as many of those that are to be met with in the back-blocks of the Antipodes. These latter have an unpleasant habit of charging upon slight provocation. The occasions

on which the Argentine animals indulge in such propensities are more rare. One of the reasons for this difference of temperament is undoubtedly due to the nature of the country. In Australasia—more especially in New Zealand—the cattle wander over a hilly country, frequently lost to the sight of man for weeks on end in the labyrinth of gorges, hollows, and valleys. On the Argentine plains the cattle are visible for many miles, and are themselves well accustomed to the passage of human beings through their midst. In addition to this, as they are usually dependant on the ingenuity of man for their water supply, they are wont to congregate in the neighbourhood of the wells, and the traffic upon the line of these is generally considerable.

The fine stock of the "cabañas"—studs—are treasured, housed, and nursed with all the care which these are wont to exact in breeding centres at home. Should a Gaucho have charge of one of these creatures—as a matter of fact, this is not usually the case—his heart is apt to turn to water, and his pride in the sleek, aristocratic animal is such that he is apt to spoil it through ill-judged kindness. In the case of a Gaucho, for instance, who had charge of a pedigree Durham Bull, it was discovered that the creature was being overfed. In consequence, it was ordered that the Durham should be placed in a certain stall without food during certain hours of the day. But his ultra-obesity continued, and its cause was discovered a short while after. The thought of his pet's banting had been too much for the feelings of the peon. He was surprised one day in the act

of conveying large armfuls of alfalfa by stealth to his charge during the forbidden hours. The Gaucho's affection occasionally takes as irrational a form as that of his dislike.

MENDOZA—RUINS OF CATHEDRAL DESTROYED BY EARTHQUAKE.

MENDOZA—A VINE LANE.

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CHAPTER XV.

THE WORKING OF AN ESTANCIA—PASTORAL.

Progress of the Industry—Improvement in breeds—Favourite strains—The cabaña—Three methods of procedure—Cattle sheds—Sheep—The advent of the New Zealander—A comparison of methods—The live-stock census—Some remount transactions—Mule breeding—Pigs—The danger of over-stocking.

The Argentine Camp, until comparatively recent years, was known purely as a pastoral country. But with the discovery that great tracts of land were admirably suited to the cultivation of alfalfa (lucerne), wheat, maize, and linseed, the eyes of the landowner became widely opened to the profitable agricultural prospects which had opened up. Some of the more conservative Estancieros retained their ancient grazing lands; others, fascinated by the new order of things, turned their attention solely to cereals, while a number of the more prudent decided to devote an equal share of their enterprise to both branches of the industry. During later years, however, it has become evident that the interest in agriculture has tended to the absorption of more and more grazing land. The country—that of the inner Camp, at all events—has become split up into divisions that ever increase in number as they decrease in size, as a growing number of colonists come to rent their lands from the Estancieros. The harvests, in consequence, have swollen steadily in proportion, until at the present moment Argentina, though not yet the chief

producer, ranks as the largest exporter of wheat in the world. The importance of the other crops, moreover, with the exception perhaps of linseed, is advancing in a similar ratio. Dating back to the period when the real strides of progress commenced, this tremendous result has been achieved in less than twenty years' time.

The advance made on the pastoral side of farming does not fall short of the other in rapidity. In a very little longer space of time the standard of Argentine cattle and of livestock generally has improved in the same proportion that the wheat harvest has grown. Long-horned, rakish, bony criollos (native breds) have given up their place to the sleek short-horn. In the sheep districts, Lincolns, Leicesters, and Merinos have superseded the scrubby ovine adventurers that once stalked the plains, grim in aspect, *sans* breed, *sans* meat, *sans* everything! The horse, moreover, has shortened his ears, cleaned his legs and shoulders, and arched his neck. It is a question of new lamps for old here, with a vengeance! Indeed, at the present moment it may be said that the average of even such a huge entirety as that of the Argentine herds and flocks would compare favourably enough with that of any other portion of the globe. The transformation has not effected itself, of course. It has been brought about only by an almost fabulous outlay in the importation of bulls, rams, and sires.

As the elder branch of the two, the pastoral side of estancia life deserves to be dealt with first. In the matter of cattle, the chief strains that have been introduced to the country are the Durham, the Hereford,

and the polled Angus. Of these three the Durham is by far the most popular. The number of occasions on which the price of bulls of this breed, purchased for Argentina, has reached four figures is no longer a matter for wonder here. Indeed, did the Estancieros cease to purchase, there would be a woeful gap in the commercial results of many an agricultural show in the Shires.

Opinions upon the various orders of cattle differ as much as the breeds themselves. As a proof of this, the Hereford, though the strain is by no means generally popular in Argentina, is lord of all he surveys in Uruguay. The polled Angus, though the herds of this are by no means numerous, finds many fervent admirers. It is claimed for this breed by many that up to a certain age it matures and fattens more quickly than any other, and thus enables a more rapid return of the capital it involves.

The importation of stallions has been conducted on as lavish a scale as the rest. The best blood of all strains, whether thoroughbred, hackney, or Clydesdale has been called into requisition. As an instance of this it is necessary to quote no fact beyond that Señor Ignacio Correas paid to his Majesty the King thirty thousand guineas for the celebrated stallion "Diamond Jubilee."

There are three methods by which an Estanciero may deal with his livestock. The first and most ambitious is the formation of a first-class cabaña (stud). In order to obtain a suitable collection of animals it is necessary to spare no expense, and he who essays the venture must be possessed of a very

long purse. Indeed, he who would be among the first flight of Argentine breeders must be prepared to pay two or three thousand pounds each for a crack animal or two, for to fall behind his rivals is fatal to the reputation of the stud. The standard of breed, moreover, is continually rising. A reputation for fine stock once gained, however, the venture cannot very well fail to be successful. It is then that the demands for the cattle come from all quarters of the Republic, and a lesser breeder who has become enamoured of the strain is seldom in a mood to haggle over prices.

The second method is a similar one, applied to cattle of a "useful" rather than of a brilliant stamp. The capital required for this is, of course, far less. At the same time the period of probation ere the name of such a breeder attains to celebrity is proportionately prolonged. The chances of pulling off one of those dramatically high-priced sales which go so far to advertise the "swell" cabaña is here impossible. Thus the methods of these more modest cabañas, though sound and sure enough, entail a far longer road to success.

The third system is that of buying stock of all degrees, with the idea of effecting a rapid sale. By this means the estancia becomes a fattening ground for continually changing herds of stock. The owner of the land will purchase a certain number, and will hold them upon his pastures for a day or a month or more until he is enabled to dispose of them at a profit. In such a case the Estanciero is, of course, as much a dealer as a farmer. The work is strenuous enough, for he has frequently to travel for days together,

CARTING QUEBRACHO LOGS.

A 6½-TON QUEBRACHO LOG—FLORENCIA-BRASAIL RAILWAY.

Facing Page 165.

scouring the country far and wide in search of a bargain in cattle by means of which he may re-stock his land. Speculation with its accompanying risk is greater here than in the two other branches of the industry. Nevertheless, providing that the business is in the hands of a shrewd judge of stock, there is perhaps more money to be made—or, rather, a certain amount may be more *rapidly* made—than by either of the two former methods.

It may be mentioned that the sheds in which these pedigree cattle are housed are as a general rule models of their kind. Along the interior of the large structures a passage usually runs, on either side of which are the animals in their luxurious stalls. In connection with each of these stalls is a door opening upon the outside of the building by means of which the interior may be thoroughly and efficiently cleansed. In some instances the floor is trelissed, though not in such a manner as to cause inconvenience to the valuable inmate, and the sanitary results of this are undoubtedly excellent.

Sheep, although they abound throughout the Republic, would seem to thrive best of all in the Southern districts of the province of Buenos Aires. In the past these have been favoured with a far smaller amount of intelligent interest than has been the case with cattle. As a matter of fact, the breed has not been studied as closely as it might have been in the majority of estancias, and, although the flocks have always been large in point of numbers, the welfare of the animals has received but small attention. Of late years, however, more scientific

methods have been brought to bear upon the industry; a better class of ram has been introduced, and the standard of the sheep has risen in proportion.

Now that the Southern districts, even those well down in Patagonia itself, have proved themselves so suitable to the supporting of flocks, the interest in these has redoubled, and the future of the sheep—or, rather, that of its owner—has assumed a far brighter complexion. There is an element that has contributed to the welfare of this industry which must not be overlooked. A number of New Zealanders have arrived of late in Argentina, and more, attracted by the prospects held out, are yet arriving. Their experience is naturally most invaluable, and a number of those estancias which depend more particularly upon sheep have benefited very greatly by their advent.

It may be as well to make a digression here—for which the New Zealanders are responsible. In any case a comparison between the methods of Argentina and of our own colony justifies it. In the important matter of sheep-farming wide differences have existed between the two. Indeed, from a scientific point of view, Argentina in this respect has been years and periods of years behind New Zealand.

In Argentina those who have had to deal with the land have grown so accustomed to its yielding back to them with generous interest whatever they have placed within it that they have troubled little about the physiology and general health of the latter. For many purposes the failure of this attention has produced no untoward results whatever. Indeed, this

rich dark land, with its enormous depth of topsoil, bids fair to permit liberties to be taken with it for a number of years to come. The manner in which it was called upon to support sheep, however, was one of the few proceedings it resented. It was obvious that the sheep were not thriving so well as they might. Then upon the scene came the New Zealander, accustomed to watch jealously every sovereign and every acre, and accustomed to wrestle by main force with the land that all might be wrung from it that it would yield. The arrival of this graduate of a harder and more scientific school brought to light faults of which the Argentine had never been aware. There were lands in plenty that had carried sheep for year after year in quantities that it should never have been expected to support without the rendering of some artificial aid. Unbroken and unrested, it was in passive rebellion. The thick layers of fruitful soil beneath were yet there, it was true, but the surface had become discouraged, fouled, sick and sorry. The new comers settled down to work, and when they had dealt with it the discovery was made, to the astonishment of the Argentines, that the land would bear still more sheep than before, and that, moreover, it would continue to do so beneath the persuasion of intelligent treatment.

It was thus that the New Zealander began, and as he began, he has gone on. He found sheep with undocked tails, and he caused them to be docked. He discovered a rampant condition of foot-rot and of other diseases, and demonstrated the cures. In fact, he has been tinkering here, trimming and mend-

ing there, until the Argentine looks about him in surprise at the result. The latter, as a consequence, has found it worth his while of late to bestow upon the sheep some portion of that interest which he had before lavished almost entirely on cattle. In the matter of sheep farming there is no doubt about the debt of gratitude which is due from the Argentine to the New Zealander.

As may be gathered from the foregoing, the industry of stockbreeding in all its branches is in a flourishing condition in Argentina at the present time. There is one aspect of the situation, however, which, although its influence has been little remarked so far, is less satisfactory. According to the statistics afforded by such methods of census as are possible, the numbers of both cattle and sheep in the Republic show a tendency to diminish rather than to increase. The cause of this is, of course, no organic one. The situation is the result of nothing beyond a strong demand, and of perhaps rather too great an eagerness to meet it. At the same time it is obvious that, should the present rate of sales continue unchecked, the consequences cannot fail to be far from beneficial to the industry.

It has been said that the average Argentine knows as much about a horse as anyone else. His prejudices, moreover, against obtaining the better of a deal in these quadrupeds are no stronger than those of others all the world over. During that period when horses were required for the Boer War by the British Government, and buyers were scouring the Republic for that purpose, opportunities of the kind were

plentiful enough. There is at least one Ar
breeder who holds no great opinion of the s
of one or two of the number of those officials sent
for the purpose. That this gentleman, an Argent
by birth, is well qualified to judge may be assu
from the fact that he himself sold very little shor
six thousand horses in this manner. He has a numb
of amusing stories on the point which he is by
means averse to relate. According to his account,
purchasing was conducted on lines which favou
the less sterling merits that lie in showiness and in the
art of grooming rather than in the real and invaluable
qualities of the horse. It is, of course, impossible
give individual attention to such large numbers
the animals as are wont to graze together in Arge
tina. Thus, when the various troops of horses w
mustered for inspection by the buyers, the Argen
found to his astonishment that it was the shagg
coated horses which were "cast," quite irrespective of their actual points. After that, in his own words, the matter was easy enough. The rejected animals were clipped, groomed, and brought round again as though they constituted a new lot. Then, as they were spurred proudly past, the buyer would purchase them with an easy mind.

If there be any consolation for this species of "regrettable incident," it lies in the fact that those German officers who have recently been acting in a similar capacity for their Government have been, if anything, rather more outwitted than the British. The greater part of the live-stock which went from the Republic to German East Africa caused a sum

of money to be left behind which the Argentine is prepared to regard with the greatest complacency as its equivalent.

The outbreak of a colonial war almost invariably comes in the light of a harvest to Argentina. One of the first consequences of such an event is an active demand not only for horseflesh, but for the ever useful mule as well. And these latter, owing to their comparatively limited numbers, show a large profit to those who are fortunate enough to own them at such periods. This branch of breeding is now receiving considerable attention in view of the success with which it has met.

Pig breeding has made great strides of late in the neighbourhood of the more important centres. Several of the larger estancias, after some tentative experiments, have gone seriously into the matter. Great hopes are entertained for the industry, and the results of the as yet insignificant shipments are eagerly watched.

The pastoral side of Argentine Camp life is undoubtedly a sound one. Perhaps the chief danger that attends it in normal times lies in the temptation to overstock the land. The desire to crowd as many head of stock as possible upon the least area is natural enough in view of the large profits which result if all goes well. The risk involved, on the other hand, is a very serious one. In dealing with stock it is necessary for the possibility of drought and of locusts to be borne continually in mind. For, should either or both of these visitations come about at a period when the land is stocked with more than

it should legitimately be called upon to carry, the consequences to the Estanciero are grave. But, should the amount of stock have been kept within reasonable bounds, there is no reason why either of these plagues should affect the pastoral side of the estancia to any very serious extent.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE WORKING OF AN ESTANCIA—AGRICULTURAL.

Rapidity of development—The productiveness of the land—Wheat—Maize—Linseed—Their remunerative powers and risks—Alfalfa—Its influences upon the country—Characteristics of the plant—The Italian Colonist—His enterprise—His dwelling—Methods of construction—Migratory farmers—Some rewards of industry—The colonist and finance—His utility—Episodes of the past—The Entre Rios Colony.

The history of Argentina's agricultural progress is at least as eventful as that of her pastoral advance. Indeed, its development has been even more rapid. For centuries the Camp has supported its herds of stock, ill-bred and semi-wild though these were. The birth of agriculture, however, in a form worthy of the name, dates from a period certainly no more than twenty years back. The amazing spread of the industry may be gauged from the following statistics. Prepared by the Editor of the *Review of the River Plate*, Mr. E. Danvers; they show the areas at present occupied by the three main crops.

	1905-6. Acres.	1904-5. Acres.
Wheat	14,043,235	12,863,497
Linseed	2,557,035	2,918,175
Maize	6,400,500	5,717,600

The past five years have produced a sequence of extraordinarily successful harvests in every branch of agriculture alike. It is during this period that the wave of crops has spread far and wide, for, though the risk and consequent tension of mind involved is

AT THE EDGE OF A CHACO FOREST.

BRIDGE ON FLORENCIA-BRASAIL RAILWAY.

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greater in their production that that in stock-breeding, the rewards that a successful year brings forth are large in proportion. Thus, though the production of linseed has slightly diminished, the cry is still for maize and wheat, and yet more maize and yet more wheat. As it is, portions of the country teem with fields of each as thickly as the fields themselves are studded with stalks. And yet, notwithstanding the imposing results already achieved, not a tithe of the land has yet been cultivated, and the industry is still in its infancy. With the whole area, or even a considerable portion of it, once under cultivation, the productive possibilities of the land beggar imagination.

It cannot be denied that this great wealth of fruitfulness has come somewhat in the manner of a surprise to all concerned. In one sense it may be said that the country has hastened forward to a point a little ahead of even those who were pushing it. The most sanguine of Estancieros and of railway managers was scarcely prepared for that which has actually occurred. During the past few years, as a consequence, the struggle has been one to keep pace with the soil—an endeavour which has a somewhat Gilbertian ring. The soil has yielded, and the cry has gone up for more labour, more harvesting machinery, and more railway engines and wagons. For of late years the harvests have strained the working powers of these indispensable auxiliaries to the utmost. Goods trains have run by day and by night, with every available engine and wagon pressed into the service, and each labouring hard. Yet the

mountains of wheat bags awaiting transport at the sidings have swollen daily in spite of the filled trucks and of the strenuous efforts to reduce their bulk.

An instance of this spread of agriculture is afforded by the harvest results of 1905-6. It was during this summer that numerous long faces were to be met with among the Estancieros. After years of kindly absence the locusts had once more put in their dreaded appearance. Many land-owners, in consequence, suffered to a greater or smaller extent from the ravages of these merciless pests. But the tale of misfortune did not end there. On the top of it came a drought that of a certainty worked no good to man, beast, or cereal. During the previous summer, on the other hand, nothing whatever had occurred to mar the full success of the crops. And yet, in spite of the drought and of the locust's depredations, the crop results of 1905-6 exceeded those of the previous year by ten per cent. A more certain proof of progress it would be difficult to find.

Of the three main crops—wheat, maize, and linseed—the most remunerative in a favourable year is generally held to be maize. At the same time the risks that attend the production of this cereal are proportionately greater. As regards locusts (to which objectionable gentry special mention is accorded in a later chapter), it is to the appetites of these that the maize affords an especially easy prey. At the time of their arrival the linseed harvest has usually been gathered, and the wheat has hardened its ears to such an extent that it can frequently afford to ignore the insects—a course of procedure of which very few other

growths are capable. But the maize, with its rich green leaves, and its large, soft, half-ripened heads, constitutes the food that of all others rejoices the locust's heart, should it chance to light upon a field which bears it. For this reason—and for little beyond—a decided element of risk attends the crop.

The remunerative powers of the cereal, on the other hand, are enormous. Land suitable for its production may be purchased from anywhere between 150 to 250 dollars per hectare. Such figures, however, are extremely rough, for so great is the range of price, dependent as it is on the quality of the soil and the locality, that hard and fast limitations fail to enter into the matter. In any case the proportion of profit which may be derived from a single successful maize crop occasionally amounts to a sum which represents the half of the entire purchase price of the land so employed. The fact is an admitted one. The occurrence, moreover, is by no means so rare as might be expected. Yet, in the face of the mere possibility of such a return, there are those who assert that land values in Argentina are tending towards inflation.

Linseed, though the acreage of its cultivation has diminished slightly, is an extremely profitable cereal when all goes well. The locust, as has been explained, is wont to pay his visits at a time when the harvests of this are stored. The danger here lies in the possibility that a late frost may nip the plants. But one may reasonably expect, when growing linseed, that its fate will steer it safely between late frosts and early locusts.

Alfalfa (lucerne) represents more to the Argentine

that a mere plant, to be grown, cut, utilised, and then thought of no more. Beyond its intrinsic merits it possesses a sentimental value here. Indeed, to separate Argentina and alfalfa either physically or metaphysically would now be an impossibility. For alfalfa has become as much part and parcel of the country as the thistle of the Camp or the Gaucho himself.

This plant, which has played so important a part in Argentine destiny, was first introduced within the country about eighteen years ago. Until then scarcely a soul in the length and breadth of the Republic troubled to remember the existence of the growth. And those that might have done so little dreamed that the soil had a welcome prepared for it such as the future showed. The revolution that its introduction effected is worthy of a front page in Argentine history. It was owing to the advent of alfalfa, nothing more or less, that the herds of cattle upon the Camp commenced to grow sleek and fat, and wealthy, moreover, of the reception into their midst of that wealth of pedigree stock which has made the modern cabañas that which they are. As a result, the value of Camp is now judged for the most part by its capacity for bearing alfalfa.

The area most suitable for alfalfa is a large one, several hundred miles square, to the west of Buenos Aires. It is in this area, naturally, that the best specimens of Argentine and imported cattle are to be met with. As a crop, it is one of the hardiest, possessing, moreover, the pleasant habit of springing up a second and a third time after it has been cut during

INDIAN HUT, PATAGONIA.

LAST OF CIVILISATION—RIO CHICO, ABOUT EIGHT DAYS FROM SANTA CRUZ—A PRIMITIVE RANCHO.

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the summer. Indeed, the rapidity of its growth in Argentina is amazing. This is especially evident during the period of its cutting. Here, one may remark that, almost ere the first crop has been fully stacked, the fresh green has already sprouted up, and has commenced to cover the dried stalks once again.

Alfalfa, though well suited to several varieties of soil, possesses strong likes and dislikes on this point. It will, for instance, tolerate no earth such as clay or any other which has plastic properties. It is said to breathe through its stalk, and in rainy weather closely clinging soil of the kind that presses in upon the plant is held to choke it. The roots of the plant burrow far down into the earth, and, provided there be water beneath the surface, they will travel yards and yards in order to reach it. As a matter of fact, districts in which water lies at some distance beneath the surface are considered to form ideal spots for the cultivation of the lucerne. In soil such as this it will continue to sprout in undiminished abundance, without the necessity of the plants being renewed. In unsuitable earth, however, it dies gradually away, diminishing in size and strength, and becoming overgrown and choked by the grasses until no sign of it is left. The growth of a first-class Argentine alfalfa field, on the other hand, will attain to the height of a yard. Before it is sown in the first instance it is usual to introduce other crops for three or four years into the area which it is destined to cover. By this means the coarse native grasses are to a great extent done away with, and elbow room is allowed to the more valuable cereal.

The policy of the owner of a large estancia is to sub-divide the workings of the place as much as possible. The proprietor of an estate of ten leagues, for example, might retain five leagues for pastoral purposes, and allot the remaining half to agriculture. Though he may retain a small portion of this latter for his own use, the usual procedure is to sub-let the greater part of it to colonists who act as tenant farmers. Thus a certain portion of a large estate will be split up into a number of small holdings. The tendency to sub-divide in this manner, moreover, is increasing with the spread of agriculture. The colonists themselves are almost invariably of Italian nationality—the few exceptions consist of members of separate and exceptional colonies which are referred to later, and may for the moment be ignored.

The Italian colonist has now become a most important and invaluable asset of Argentine agricultural life. He is allotted a certain portion of the land—anything from a hundred to a thousand acres. It is his business to farm it, and to return to his landlord a certain proportion of the products which it yields. This proportion may represent anything between five and twenty-five per cent., according to circumstances. It is rendered, moreover, in kind. That is to say out of every hundred bags of wheat threshed, ten, or whatever number had been agreed upon, will be delivered to the Estanciero to serve in lieu of rent.

The spirit of enterprise displayed by these colonists is considerable. Upon his arrival at the estancia he has the right to expect nothing from his "patron" in the shape of agricultural implements or dwelling-

The bare land and nothing beyond is his to do what he likes with. The formation of these small communities is, in consequence, interesting to watch.

In the first place it may be taken for granted that the colonist is a married man. The disadvantages that a bachelor suffers in a struggle in which the greater is the number of hands both male and female, the greater the profit, cripple the chances of success to such an extent that few of these attempt it. First of all, then, arises the necessity for the building of a house. In this, as in all else, the head of the family is assisted by all the remaining members that have attained to a working age—and amongst these Italians the period at which this phase commences is sufficiently youthful. The usual method by which these dwellings are contrived is the following. Two large boards are placed parallel to each other at the spot where one of the walls is to stand. Between the pair a space of a foot or more in breadth is left. Into this is placed wet mud that, for binding purposes, should contain a leaven of straw. The mud is left until it has become dry and hardened. The boards are then removed, when, lo and behold! the first wall of the home is already standing! The others are fashioned in the same way; spaces for the door and windows are cut, and glass inserted within the latter by those of a luxurious turn of mind. After which a large baking oven, domelike in shape, and constructed of the same convenient earth, is raised up by the side of the main building. Then, when the indispensable well has been dug, the establishment is complete, and ready for its inmates.

From a spectacular point of view, it must be admitted that the result of it all is striking rather than handsome. Occasionally one may light upon one or two of these dwellings that are of fair size, but the black mud walls are sombre and sordid, and even the best built of these edifices resembles—possibly because it actually is—a hovel. There is, however, abundant excuse for the undoubted meanness of these dwellings. The colonist is seldom permitted to occupy the same land for more than three or four years in succession. It naturally lies in his interest to extract as much as possible from the land while he is upon it, and the soil, in consequence, is wont to be given over after some such period to the restful condition that a change to pasturage effects. It is necessary then for the colonist to move on to fresh country. He may possibly find that which he desires in another portion of the same estate. But it is far more probable that he will be forced to move his household goods and chattels to another property, where he will start afresh.

As may be imagined, therefore, a dwelling of any greater pretensions than the one which he is accustomed to build is, considering the limited space of time he is destined to occupy it, entirely unnecessary—at all events to the frugal mind of the Italian. But if his actual financial status were to be gauged from the appearance of his home, the errors of judgment would be amazing. The Italian, at the very least, has derived as much benefit from the prosperous era as anyone else. Indeed, there are not a few, who, having been content with their mud walls and their

VINEYARD, MENDOZA.

COLONIST'S HUT.

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periodical migrations all the while that their bank balance in the town was soaring upwards by leaps and bounds, have now reaped their full reward. In their case there has been no half-way house on the road to the actual evidence of prosperity. The result rings somewhat of a fairy tale. For there are some who have returned straight from the black mud hut to Italy, and, proclaimed capitalists now, live in edifices of white stone, with terraces, pleasure gardens, and vineyards for the prizes of their past frugality.

So far as industry is concerned, it must be admitted that the colonist is worthy of even such apparently magical results as these. Indeed, the labours of an Italian family of the kind are prodigious. They are wont to rise, both men and women, not only ere sun rise, but actually ere the break of day in order that the first streak of dawn may find them fully prepared for the work. There are even instances where the men, in their anxiety to leave no chance forsaken, have taken out the teams and ploughed the earth by night when the moon shone with sufficient brilliancy for the purpose. So far, it is true, they have been inclined to introduce "elbow-grease" rather than science into the business. But the fertile soil has amply condoned the lack of the latter.

The system of renting lands upon these conditions offers eminently favourable opportunities to the colonist who, though possessed of enterprise, lacks capital. In a good harvest year the percentage of his crops that the Estanciero claims will leave him bountifully provided for, while even in a moderate or poor season there is some consolation in the fact that the

proportionate lowering of the rent, or, rather, of its equivalent, leaves him the chance of putting something by, an unsuccessful harvest notwithstanding.

As regards the modest items of finance which are requisite, the portionless colonist, once settled upon the land, experiences no difficulty in obtaining all the credit necessary for his purposes. Prior to the harvest season he is not expected to pay for anything at all. Agricultural implements, bodily comforts, clothes, and all his other requirements are delivered him from the nearest store on the understanding that he will liquidate the amounts when his crops come home. In some cases the interest charged is undoubtedly somewhat exorbitant. But then, after all, the colonist is living merely upon expectations, and, should by any chance the harvest prove an utter failure, it is certain enough that the beginner will have lost his labour, and his creditor his money. The total failure of the crops, however, is an extremely rare occurrence. The event is only likely to take place if the farmer, in a speculative mood, has thrown all his eggs in one basket, and sown the whole of his land with maize that an unwelcome host of locusts has swallowed wholesale.

It has been said that the number of these colonists has increased considerably of late years. But there is room, and, indeed, need for many more of them. Were there ten in the place of every one that is now labouring upon the Camp, the benefits to Argentina that would accrue are almost incalculable. Nevertheless, the increase of these immigrant farmers is by no means proportionate to the growing prosperity and

financial strides of the country. One of the chief reasons for this is the reluctance of the Italian to settle in the remoter districts. In the days that have gone by he has undoubtedly suffered much at the hands of the Gaucho. Ere the dread of the law was introduced into the Camp it was upon the homesteads of the Italian settlers that the fiercer and more turbulent spirits among the natives were wont to make their raids. There were wild deeds in plenty then, with grim and murderous sport for their motive. Even in these days, lying in his small and solitary hut, he is wont to bear the brunt of any lawlessness that may have broken out in the less populous districts. It is in such places, too, that the comisarios of police have not in every instance fallen out of the habit of treating the claims to justice of these immigrants with a harshness which they do not dream of according to members of other nationalities.

Outrages in the Camp are few and far between now. Nevertheless, in certain districts the pioneer colonist of the kind, perhaps by reason of his very insignificance, finds it necessary to be on his guard. A loaded gun and a pack of fierce dogs of enormous size are some of the evidences of this preparedness. Both weapons are formidable, and, in the hands of an excited Southerner, are a little apt to be let loose upon the smallest provocation. Indeed, when approaching one of these humble and isolated homesteads by night, it is as well to make clear one's identity with the least possible delay.

But, although the Italian has not yet overcome his reluctance to venture very far from the main centres,

the path is being daily made more smooth for him. The day is doubtless not far distant when his numbers will spread yet further and wider over the land. And as an immigrant he is a complete success. Unremitting in labour, inured by temperament to the heat, it is under his hand primarily that the soil is being made to produce such wonderful results.

With the exception of the newly-founded Boer settlement, the sole colony of any importance whose members are other than of Italian nationality is situated near Colon in Entre Rios. The farmers here are of all races—Russians, Scandinavians, Austrians, Poles, and many others. Each of these, however, instead of working as a tenant-agriculturist, owns his own small area of freehold land. The colony is probably an unique one of its kind in the Republic. In many cases its inhabitants cling to their original garb and customs. Indeed, the scene in the neighbourhood of the priest's establishment is a picturesque one, when girls and women in a variety of those striking costumes of the Eastern European peasantry drive up with their offerings of vegetables, fowls, eggs, and the like.

The country in which these homesteads lie is known as the Park of Entre Rios. The name is sufficiently appropriate, for a more smiling and pleasant land it would be difficult to meet with. Its richly grassed undulations are broken by stately belts of timber, and amidst these and the corn-lands the homes of the fortunate agriculturalists lie.

CHAPTER XVII.

CAMP TOPICS.

Harvest in the Camp—Methods of cutting and stacking wheat—Perilous storm winds—Threshing and contract labour—English agricultural implements versus American—Camp roads and Motor wagons—Pumps and wells—Scarcity of timber—Fencing—The cattle dip—Dairy farming—The Carcarañá creamery.

It is during harvest-time that the Camp shows itself at its busiest. At this period the clouds of dust that denote the movements of horses and men, rise in profusion from the surface of the earth. Managers, overseers, and Capatazes are riding briskly to and fro, hovering between one group of labourers and another. There are nomadic troops of these latter, too, moving onwards from where the crops lie cut and stacked to other fields, where the standing harvests yet await them. Immigrants from Italy, and Spain, they have come, swallow-like, for the summer season, to return to their homes when the field work is done. For the Argentine harvest sends out its call far and wide, and thousands of miles of ocean and many marine spasms lie between it and a great portion of its army of labourers.

There are the threshing machines, too, that move ponderously from place to place. The heavy bulk of the machine is wont to be hauled by bullocks. Moving together with it is the caravan of its owner, and of his attendants, while the accompanying groups of spare bullocks and horses complete a procession that advances in an imposing fashion across the plain.

As the harvest proceeds the huge stacks commence to rise up on every hand. Singly, in twos, and in threes, they dot the landscape so far as the eye can reach, and, like giant mushrooms, increase in number every day. Then the large Galpons (warehouses) open their doors wide to receive the produce, while later come the long strings of harvest wagons, laden to the brim, and drawn by half-a-dozen horses, that wend their way towards the nearest railway-station.

Agriculture here would seem nothing if not contrived upon a gargantuan scale. The cutting of one of Argentina's giant wheat-fields, for instance, affords a sight not easily to be forgotten. The machines for the purpose are wont to be propelled from behind instead of being dragged from the front. To this end a lengthy pole protrudes from the back of the structure, and to this are harnessed half-a-dozen or more horses. Attached to the outer side of the cutting machine is a large harvest cart into which the wheat is propelled as it goes. These carts are drawn by a team of oxen, with a pony in the forefront as leader. It is the duty of this latter to concentrate his superior intelligence on the way to be taken, and to guide the others in the right direction when the ox-goad of the driver has failed to meet with the desired attention.

At the first glimpse the entire combination presents a somewhat complex aspect. But the joint machines, with the horses to the rear, and the bullocks in front with their pioneer pony, seldom meet with a hitch during their progress. And all the while the cutter is mowing broad swathes from the sea of golden

heads, and a continuous stream of wheat is leaping over to fall within the harvest-cart.

The large oblong stacks are wont to be formed in the centre of the field, which is almost without exception square in shape. Four roads, each at right angles to the other, are cut from this point through the wheat to its outer edge. It is along these roads that the collecting wagons will travel to relieve the harvest-carts, when filled, of their load. If the matter be well organised, each of these wagons will arrive at the outer edge in time to meet a harvest cart, as it travels at right angles to it. Having received its load, it will return to the stack, and start outwards again to meet one of the harvest carts at the junction of the inner and the outer roads once more. By this means, a large area of the wheat is removed in a remarkably short space of time.

Although the chief strain of the supervision of labour ends with the stacking of the crops, it may be mentioned that even then the anxiety concerning the welfare of the produce is not altogether done with. In the Camp, over whose level surface the wind is wont to sweep at times with as much force as though it harrowed the open ocean, there remains always a possibility of the contents of the largest and heaviest stacks being blown away to the four winds. I have seen the remnants of a stack such as this whirled into the air and swept along for half a mile or so, until the barrier of the wire fencing held back the greater part. The remedy for this is a fairly simple one. A strong line of wire or rope is passed longitudinally along the top of the stack, its ends hanging almost to

the ground on either side. Weights of stone or lead are attached to these, which, if sufficiently heavy and properly adjusted, should protect a well-built stack against almost any wind that may blow.

As has been explained, a larger or smaller portion of the harvest area is wont to be sub-let to the Italian agriculturist. That, however, which the Estanciero retains for himself is usually cut and stacked by contract. Indeed, this form of labour is as popular a one in Argentina as it would seem to be in the rest of recently developed countries. With the exception of the every-day work of the estancia, such as the care of its various animals and the like, which is performed by the regular staff, there is scarcely an undertaking that is not carried out on these lines. The construction of fence lines, galpons, cattle-dips, and the majority of the more important requisites form almost invariably the tasks of the contract-labourer.

In those cases where the Estanciero possesses no engine of his own, the threshing is accomplished by the perambulating machines, already referred to, that scour the country at harvest time. Here, the scale of payment is based on the profit-sharing system. The owner of the threshing machine, who contracts for all the necessary labour, usually receives one bag out of every three in return. This share of the proceeds may appear to some as large out of all proportion. It is certainly quite sufficient, but it must be remembered that a heavy machine of the kind is not to be hauled about the country for nothing, and that the incidental expenses of the concern are considerable. The labour, moreover, is of a sufficiently strenuous order,

TRANSANDINE TRAIN.

THE FAMATINA MINES.

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when it is taken into consideration that it is performed at that season when the summer is at its hottest.

In Argentina, as is the case in our own Colonies, the supply of agricultural implements is shared between the British and American manufacturers. So far as quality is concerned, it is no mere boast to say that the British machinery has by far the best of it. In durability and efficiency this is wont to stand the tests of time and wear to the complete satisfaction of its employer. Unfortunately in this, as well as in so many other branches of industry, the American spirit of enterprise eclipses that of the British.

An instance of this was given me by an Estanciero who, an Englishman himself, was keenly anxious to employ nothing but British-manufactured machinery. He had used a reaping machine of that origin for years, until an accident, caused, it may be said, through no fault in the implement itself, made it necessary for one of its parts to be replaced. As the matter was urgent, he wired to this effect, supplemented his telegram by letter, and vented his later impatience in a series of further wires. Nevertheless, he remained not only without the desired portion of the machinery, but also with peculiarly little satisfaction in the matter of replies. In the end, he was forced in self-defence to purchase an American substitute, and, although it has failed him on more than one occasion, he has never been left in the lurch, for the parts which it has been found necessary to replace have been supplied with what might be termed sensational rapidity. Thus at the moment he is employing—altogether against his will—a machine

made out of England. The moral is too obvious to be pointed out. The unfortunate part of the matter, moreover, is that the instance is by no means a solitary one.

There are many who are convinced that the Camp is now ripe for the employment of the motor-wagon. Should a suitable appliance of the kind make its appearance, it is quite certain that it would meet with a phenomenal success. There are, however, at present several difficulties in the way of the ordinary motor vehicle. Camp roads themselves, in the first place, are extremely uneven and rutty. Secondly, it is necessary to take into consideration the dust with which they are wont to be covered during the summer. It is a little difficult to see how the objections are to be overcome so far as the roads themselves are concerned. The greater part of the soil over which they run is of immense depth, entirely innocent, moreover, of stone or even of pebbles. Thus road-mending to any serious and efficient extent is practically out of the question. The ruts remain, until some slight deviation of the traffic obliterates them to form fresh ones by their side. It follows that, owing to the absence of any surface but the soft crumbling earth, the dust which is wont to overlay it is somewhat overpowering in its volume. The motor-wagon, in consequence, would have to be constructed so as to enable it to ignore these ubiquitous clouds of powdered earth. It should be all that the Colonial buggy is compared with the vehicles of older countries —lighter, hardier, and stronger. A powerful argument in favour of the possibility of the desired con-

summation lies in the almost universal absence of any marked gradients. Indeed, the country over which it would be required to travel may be likened in miniature to a billiard-table with a coarse-textured cloth.

Rivers and lakes form an extremely rare feature of the Camp. Surface water of any kind, in fact, is seldom known. That which is to be met with at a shallow depth, moreover, is wont to be brackish and salt. The difficulty of the necessary supply is overcome by means of the wells and pumps that are scattered so thickly over the country-side. The old-fashioned well, which is still largely employed, consists of the ordinary circular boring, sunk very deeply into the ground, and bricked in strongly. The bucket which is employed for the purpose of filling cattle troughs and the like is of too great a size to permit of its being raised by a man. Horses are employed for this, and the manner in which the loads are raised to the surface is not a little ingenious. A chain, one end of which is fastened to the bucket, passes first of all along the groove in a wheel above the surface. When water is required the other end of the chain is attached to a horse, and a boy, mounting the animal, will ride it away from the well, by which means the bucket is dragged upwards as it goes. When the bucket has arrived at the surface it strikes against a beam, which tilts it sideways, and causes its contents to empty themselves automatically into an adjacent tank. In order to obtain a second supply the rider merely moves his horse once more to the edge of the well, the vessel falling as he approaches.

Then when it has become filled, he repeats the first operation. This method is a popular one with the Argentines, and is employed, wherever possible, for the raising of more solid substances than water. It is of considerable service, for instance, in the digging of the well itself, for by this means the earth, shovelled into the bucket, is raised to the surface with extreme rapidity.

The modern pump, however, is a far more elaborate and ambitious instrument. Worked by means of wind power as it is, the broad circular fan upon its lofty shaft induces a steady and continuous flow of water. The water deposits are considerable here, in many instances resembling small lakes. Many of these pumps are so constructed that when the water deposit which they serve is filled, the current ceases automatically, by which means an unnecessary overflow is avoided. These artificial ponds are banked up so that their surface rests six feet or more above the level of the ground, the water being conveyed downwards from them through pipes to the troughs from which the cattle drink. With wells and pumps such as these at hand, the Estanciero can afford to regard with complacency the effects of the lengthiest period of drought upon the drinking conveniences of his live stock. Naturally, all those who are in a position to introduce these modern contrivances do so, and the sight of their shafts as they stand here and there, surrounded by newly planted trees, has become a familiar one in the Camp.

A point which is of some importance as regards

FAMATINA MINE—ORIGINAL METHOD OF TRANSPORTING ORE FROM THE MINES TO THE SMELTING WORKS.

FAMATINA MINE—TENSION STATION OF AERIAL ROPE-WAY.

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the working of estancias in the Camp proper, is the scarcity of the supply of useful timber. Practically the only trees which have been induced to flourish here are the poplar, the willow, the paraiso, and the eucalyptus. These are to be found in abundance, it is true; but, although each serves its particular purpose, the wood of none of them is suitable for fence-posts, and for other such objects in which hard and durable wood is essential. The expense of fencing, owing to this scarcity of timber, is very great. An ordinary post, for instance, and by no means a good one at that, will cost a dollar. In consequence of this, the Argentine fence lines, though well laid and cared for, possess none of that finish and neatness which is evident in better supplied lands. The posts, gnarled and frequently far from straight as they are, present an effect that is more picturesque than pretty. With the opening of the timber districts in the provinces of the Chaco and San Luis, and in the territories of the far South, the prospects of an improved supply are brightening considerably, although it must be admitted that it is a fairly far cry from these well-stocked timber lands to the central Camps.

Until recent years, the cattle-dip—or cattle bath, as it is now more usually termed—was unknown in Argentina. Its introduction commenced to become general in 1901, after the tick fever had carried off an enormous number of cattle in the course of an unusually severe visitation. The idea was borrowed from Australia, and the methods of working the dip

are similar in both countries. The approach to the structure consists of a broad yard, narrowing into a "race," as it is termed in our colonies, that is to say a narrow passage, which, when once entered, can only be negotiated by the animals in Indian file. Near to the further end of this is a sliding gate, which works in a similar way to the lid of a box, as it runs in its groove. This can be pushed across the narrow passage as a barrier, or withdrawn at will. By this means, the foremost animal can be effectually shut off from the rest. The creature is then confronted by the bath itself. This is a lengthy tank, usually constructed of cement, a little broader than the animal's body, and of a depth of from eight to ten feet. In this is the water with which the medicinal dip has been mixed. It is the animal's fate—by no means his choice—to swim through this nauseous-tasting mixture, and to be pushed well beneath the surface at intervals, by men armed with poles curved at the ends, for the purpose. From his point of view, the proceeding is doubtless as inexplicable as it is distasteful. Having no option left him, he will shut his mouth tightly, and flounder through as best he may. But a more woe-begone expression than that which sits upon the creature when he has emerged upon the further side, and has won his way to a haven of dryness, it is impossible to conceive. Under the circumstances he can scarcely be expected to realise that the performance has been undertaken for his good. Nevertheless, the amount of disease and death which these invaluable dips have obviated is incalculable. Tick fever, for instance, is now prac-

tically a thing of the past, stamped out by their agency.

A still later form of cattle-dip is represented by a species of cage, which, moved by levers, can be bodily submerged beneath the waters of a tank beneath it. The cattle are driven singly into the cage, which is lowered, and then raised again, when its dripping occupant is liberated.

Dairy farming has already become an important feature in Argentine industries. Butter is now largely exported to Europe, and the produce of millions of cows is continually passing over the ocean to satisfy the demands of the home markets. So far as the local and retail butter and milk industry is concerned, this is almost entirely in the hands of the Basques. Indeed, one may be almost as certain that a dairyman will be of this nationality as that the owner of a boot-blacking establishment in Buenos Aires is a Neapolitan. With the larger companies the case is, of course, different, and as much cosmopolitanism is evident here as in the majority of Argentine concerns.

Beyond this, Argentina is capable of producing some excellent varieties of cheese, and the popularity of this latter article is undoubtedly becoming widespread. One may cite as an example of the industry the Carcaraña cheese factory, the property of Mr. Thomas. The factory is prettily situated on the banks of the Carcaraña river, within a couple of hours' railway journey from the town of Rosario. Possessing its own herd of a thousand Jersey cows, it might be thought that these would suffice for the

creamery's need in view of the fact that they produce on an average 79,000 litres of milk per month. But this is not so, for altogether the concern deals with from 150,000 to 200,000 litres of the commodity per month.

The method of receiving the milk is interesting to watch. This is brought in carts to a platform, at one end of the factory, carefully tested, and then emptied into a receptacle by the side of the platform. When this is filled a plug is withdrawn, and the large volume of milk disappears below in the manner of water emptying itself from a bath. Descending into long vats beneath, it is turned into curd, the cakes of which are ground up, placed into tins lined with gauze, and pressed until the cheese is formed. It is a rule of the factory that this latter shall remain in storage for three months before it is sold. These cheeses are made up into two sizes, one of 15 kilos and a smaller one of 3½ kilos. The price obtained for these is one dollar per kilo, for the large size, and one dollar five centavos, for the smaller size.

The demand for Carcaraña cheese would seem considerable. Although the creamery turns out an average of 10,000 kilos per month, it is found impossible to execute in full the orders received, which must be a pleasant state of affairs for the factory. The cheese produced is certainly of an excellent quality, and the extreme cleanliness which attends its manufacture is most commendable.

The system employed for the milking of the cows here is a little curious, and somewhat amusing at first sight. As the visitor approaches the spot where the

ROASTING AN "ASADO."

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operation is conducted, he will find himself all at once between lines of cows' heads. Protruding in a double row from between a series of bars that imprison them, they present a ludicrous parody of the pictures of Bluebeard's wives. Upon the other side of the barrier, the hind legs of the animals are lightly strapped together. These precautions have been found most effective, and have prevented the upsetting of much milk and of many milkers. As it is, the cows appear the picture of placidity, if one may judge by their heads, as they munch at the rackful of alfalfa before them. From the other side of the barrier comes the sound of the milk, as it squirts into the pails. The proceedings undoubtedly appear strange to many of the Jerseys. One may notice a puzzled expression upon their countenances, as they pause from time to time between the mouthfuls of alfalfa, in all probability to ruminate upon the performance from the scene of which their more intellectual portion is so ruthlessly excluded. It may be mentioned that the pneumatic method of milking has been tried here, but, according to Mr. Thomas, has not been found satisfactory.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CAMP TOPICS.

The Camp Store—Its aspects—A heterogeneous stock-in-trade—Methods of business—A centre of sociability—The siesta—Some ethics of the custom—Anthrax—A terrible visitation—Symptoms of the disease—Camp method of its cure.

From the level expanse of the Camp the structure of the trading store stands out at wide intervals. Whether of humble mud or of more pretentious brick, it represents the commercial centre of its own broad district, and as such is a place of importance to be noted in the memory of each traveller. It may stand in the midst of half-a-dozen other small, square, flat-roofed dwelling places, or its roof may be the only one within sight to break the flat monotony of the prairie. In which case it would seem to have become almost part and parcel of the Camp itself, for the cattle browse freely about it, and bellow up to its very threshold, while thistledown, butterflies, and the occasional locust fly through its doors and windows as though they ignored in contempt this puny evidence of man's handiwork. It is a place of rendezvous, nevertheless, a post office, and frequently the scene of cattle transactions which involve formidable figures.

At the first entry the interior of the Camp store is apt to strike upon the new-comer with a bewildering effect. The infinite variety of articles which bestrew

the place in all directions is a little overpowering. In one corner is a row of quaintly curved native saddles. Seen from the front as they rest upon their stands, they have something of the appearance of uneven tunnels. Girths fashioned of many strips of leather, surcingles, and tether-lines hang side by side with a sheaf of rebenques—the Argentine riding whip with its rounded shaft and its flat elongation of raw hide. Here are mounds of padlocks and nails, stacks of lamps, and coils of wire, while near by these purely industrial articles are others whose nature is more complex. These are knives a foot or so in length, and the majority of the collection wear an air that is extremely grim. The blades of some, a couple of inches across, repose in modest diffidence beneath their bright new leather sheaths, while others, in full bravado, flaunt their naked steel.

Throughout the Camp store is the strangest mixture of the North and of the South, of the sternly commonplace and of the picturesque. Beside a patent bolt of recent design will repose a maté bowl, that gourd with its silver tube through which the loved Yerba Maté, the Paraguayan substitute for tea, is sipped. Boots that might have graced a cavalier jostle bottles of patent medicine, while, stowed here and there in rolls or displayed in alluring squares, are those vivid garment materials for which the soul of the native girl and woman longs. Here, draping nothing, and displayed as it is in all its crude severity, the stuff looks garish and offensive to the eye. But, once upon the forms of those graceful women of the plains, its transformation will be complete, the out-

rage of its pattern lost in the poetry of its hanging folds.

Business in a Camp store is wont to be conducted with none of that indecent haste which prevails in more crowded centres. The Gaucho measures the day by the progress of the sun in the heavens, and an odd half hour or two is an incalculable space in so large an area. So, when he has swung himself from off his horse, he will enter at his leisure. He will salute gravely, receiving an equally dignified welcome in return. He will talk of many matters, permitting an occasional long interval of silence to intervene between his remarks. And when the purchase is at length completed, the achievement by no means implies that the moment of his departure is at hand. He will wander idly about for a while, contemplating with a serious eye some specimens of the later inventions. Of the purpose and use of the majority of these he has not the remotest idea, but the exhibition of wonder or of curiosity forms no part in the Gaucho creed. Then, with maté bowl in hand, he will seat himself in solemn silence until he has drawn up the last dregs of the " yerba " from the gourd.

If he desires it, he may extend his programme of refreshment far beyond this modest sipping. For the Camp store deals, wholesale and retail, in alcoholic liquors as well as in more solid materials. There is caña (the native spirit distilled from sugar cane), brandy, whisky, and beer from the Argentine breweries. The beer is palatable enough, and it is just possible that the establishment may be supplied with well-known brands of spirits. But if the labels

of these latter be merely gorgeous in colour and design, it is wise to trust to the caña, however newly distilled. The latent possibilities of the others are only to be believed when the liquid has been roused from its bottle.

So far as the Gaucho is concerned, if he indulge at all, it will be in his own native caña. By nature, however, he is temperate, and the small group which is wont to gather round the curiously illustrated native cards is remarkable for its decorum. Each member will sit for hours, rolling cigarettes without end the while, but, from a European standpoint, it is astonishing how much gambling can be effected to the accompaniment of so little caña. The few dollars gained or lost, moreover, trouble him little, for the Gaucho gambles in a patrician spirit even when it is his last coin that is at stake. But should his all-important dignity be slighted, should his sensitive, if inaccurate, points of honour be touched, then it is the time to beware, for it is at such moments that he remembers the knife at his waist.

But times have changed in the Camp. The days when the bar-tender was shut off from the rest by an iron grille through an aperture in which the beverages were passed are now no more. Then, but for the protection, he would have been fortunate to have preserved his life a month. Now, though knives may be drawn once in a way, he may expect to live to a green old age without it.

It is the custom among those who dwell in the cooler latitudes to condemn the siesta. The mid-day repose is often stigmatised as needless, effeminate,

not somewhat the mark of a decadent race. In a northern climate its indulgence would undoubtedly bear such interpretations. But in a country such as Argentina no reproach of the kind can be applied with justice. For here the summer's sun beats down with intense force, and if the workers on the land who rise with the coming of the dawn seek a shaded refuge from the noisiest hours they may do so with an easy mind so far as their character for energy is concerned. With dwellers in cities it may well be otherwise. The siesta is not so well recognised a habit in towns as on the land. Later rising and the advantage of cool rooms in which to pass the morning leave little excuse for its indulgence, except on the part of the peculiarly indolent.

In the Camp, although a few stoics here and there will forego the luxury, the custom is general. After a breakfast which half-a-dozen hours of work have earned, it becomes obvious to the most mercurial temperament that the hour for repose has arrived. Without the heat is shimmering and oscillating on the plains. Each creature is beneath such shelter as it can obtain. The share of this varies with the value of the animal, and at such times it is well to be a pedigree bull. For such as he will loll at their ease within perfectly ventilated stalls, while the inferior animals have perforce to be satisfied with the fainter shade thrown by the scattered Paraiso trees. As for the sheep, failing any better shelter, they wedge their heads down beneath their neighbours' bodies in the illusion that stifling wool is preferable to open sunlight.

The languor of the mid-day hour is all-pervading. When the very butterflies flap their wings with listless slowness through the air it is no time for mankind to fight against the insidious wave of drowsiness. There is a darkened room awaiting him, whose windows are barred and shuttered. The bars are relics of bygone days when a musket lay always close at hand within. But for the shutters there is as much use as there ever was, for without their aid there would be an end to the true comfort of the siesta. Its home is darkness tempered by the few bars of light that stream from the dancing points of brilliance which mark each chink. Through these tiny apertures the scent of the flowers and of the warm earth comes with just sufficient insistence to remind one of the scorching glow without. The heat has beaten down all the wonted noises of the pastures. The lowing of the cattle and the bleating of the sheep have died away completely. The hour is sacred to stillness—a restful silence that nothing but the buzzing of the myriad flies breaks. But the darkened room is sufficient protection from the invasion of these, and however loudly they may clamour without, the barrier of the shutter tones down their defiant note to a languorous humming.

But the siesta may be broken in upon by an insect tinier than the fly. Darkness possesses no terror for the mosquito. It is possible that the flute-like song of an approaching insect may separate itself with unpleasant suddenness from the vague outer chorus. When the aggressive noise vibrates within arm's length of the ear there are but two alternatives. The

one is to indulge in a pitched battle with that part of space in which the intruder is thought to be; the other is to "play 'possum," at great expense of will-power, in the forlorn hope that the insect may prove less indefatigable than the generality of his breed. Such specimens are unfortunately rare. One may fail, moreover, to obtain the full value of the hour through a misconception of the demands of the siesta. Deep slumber, for instance, should play no part whatever in this. To permit oneself to fall into such a condition is to waste entirely the charm of the moment and in all probability to court a heavy afternoon. The siesta should be taken in a series of light dozes with the knowledge and appreciation of a torpor that is gratified to the full.

If one remains thus while the sun hangs its highest in the heavens and the heat has come rolling up to subdue every living creature, the dreamy conviction of well-being is pleasant to a degree. And then, after a couple of hours or so, one may emerge once more into the outer light of day. The transition retains ever something of its element of surprise, even to one who has followed the custom of the siesta for summer after summer. As one stands blinking in the outer glow which bathes the land the hum of the flies has grown with a quick crescendo to a fierce sound that is almost akin to a many-tongued growling. Beyond, each tree and shrub stands out in a deluge of light, while about the flowers is a many-hued aureola of dancing butterflies. Before one of the larger blossoms will appear now and then the shimmering uncertainty of a humming-bird's body.

TRAVELLING COACH.

MAIL COACH.

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It has leaped into being apparently from space, and after it has poised itself, vibrating, for a while, the suddenly vacant air alone will bear witness to the gaudy apparition's departure. And as he who comes from the siesta treads upon the earth without, the dust yields its thick powder to every pressure of his foot. But he may come out to battle against the heat with an easy mind. The climax of the day is past. With each hour the coolness grows, until the fresh evening breeze sets a comfortable seal upon the sultry mid-summer day.

To turn to a less pleasant subject—that of Anthrax. The disease is by no means unknown in the Camp; indeed, in some districts it is at times prevalent to a disastrous degree. Here the visitation is by no means confined to the cattle, for the number of human beings who have contracted the ailment from these latter is considerable. The first symptom of Anthrax in a man is afforded by a red mark on the skin which causes much irritation in the first instance. Indeed, so accentuated is this that the skin is usually broken by the sufferer in his strivings after relief. Were the affected spot to remain perfect, it would be seen to develop into a flat-topped blue boil surrounded by a circle of tiny blisters which strongly resemble seed pearls. After a while the irritation ceases, and there is then no pain whatever to be felt at the spot. The blue shade of the boil has now, however, become evident, and from its appearance a Camp expert will know at once when a case of anthrax is before him. It is necessary that measures should be taken immediately upon the discovery of the disease. Far

up-country, where both doctors and scientific apparatus are lacking, the usual method of cure may seem appallingly rough and ready to many; but it is exceedingly efficient for all that. The implement employed for the purpose is nothing more elaborate than a short length of fencing wire. One end of this is heated to red hot pitch in a fire, and by means of this the affected spot is burned clean out from the surrounding flesh.

The operation, performed necessarily without anæsthetics, demands stoicism to a degree. Still, it may be of comfort to know that all sense of pain in the affected part has disappeared, and it is not until the untainted flesh is reached that the suffering becomes acute. Many Camp men who have lived in infected areas and have undergone many and very real experiences of the disease state positively that of all the known remedies this is the safest, frightfully drastic though it is. But, according to these, it is necessary that the operation should be performed at the latest on the third day. If delayed beyond this, the chances of the victims are small indeed. The disease, it should be said, is almost entirely confined to the Gauchos whose duty it is actually to handle the live stock from which it is contracted.

CHAPTER XIX.

THREE ESTANCIAS.

La Germania—A vast enterprise—Cattle breeding—Up-to-date farming—Scenes on the estate—Agricultural produce—Staff—Estancia house—Chapadmalal—Señor Martinez de Hoz—A celebrated breeder — Imported forest — The beautifying of an Estancia—La Independencia—A model of a smaller property—Mr. Bradney as a breeder of polo ponies.

Perhaps the most satisfactory method of rendering an idea of the general aspects of successful estancia life is to give a description of an estate of two of this kind. To this end I have taken as examples two large properties, the first concerned in both agriculture and the breeding of live stock, the second devoted almost entirely to the latter. The third instance given is that of a moderate sized estancia on which, as in the first case, both livestock and cereals are dealt with.

La Germania, the property of Messrs. C. E. and R. L. Gunther, who are connected with many successful enterprises in the River Plate, is one of the finest estates in the entire length and breadth of the land. Indeed, the estancia was selected by President Roca as a show place at the conclusion of Sir Thomas Holditch's delineation of the Argentine-Chilian boundary, and was visited by both these gentlemen and their staffs. On this occasion forty-three ploughs were shown at work, the one behind the other. Situated in the North West of the province of Buenos

Aires, the estancia lies at a distance of about one hundred and fifty miles from the capital. Until a couple of years ago the most adjacent railroad point from which it could be approached was the town of General Pinto on the Buenos Aires Western Railway. The Buenos Aires and Pacific Railway have now, however, carried an extension of their line through the outskirts of the property. Thus it has now a station of its own at a distance of not more than five or six miles from its central point. The same company, moreover, have under construction another branch line which runs through much of the estancia, and, joining with the first line at the "Germania" station, makes a junction of this. In the neighbourhood of the new railway station a small township is springing up, and it is likely enough ere long that this great property of thirteen leagues will possess a fair sized town community in addition to all else within its boundaries.

The breeding of cattle is carried on here on a scale sufficiently vast to open the eyes of those accustomed merely to the restricted farming operations of the old world. The manager of an estancia such as this thinks only in thousands—of steers and cows and all the rest. To say nothing of the "swell" animals that go to form the stud, there are 17,000 head of cattle upon the property. These for the most part are shorthorn crossed with Hereford. Enormous as is this herd, it is composed of a fine, even class of animals in which the leaven of pedigree blood is obvious. There are, in addition, 10,000 sheep, the majority Lincolns, and over 2,000 horses, these

UAZU FALLS, IGUAZU RIVER.

A CAMP ROAD.

, LA INDEPENDENCIA ESTANCIA.

AN OVEN BIRD'S NEST.

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latter ranging from heavy Clydesdales to light hackneys and thoroughbreds.

But the Estancia Germania does not confine its energies to the breeding of cattle, sheep and horses. The property is being utilised in an "all round" fashion, and few opportunities are allowed to slip. The place possessing some 1,100 dairy cows, there is a creamery, for instance, worked by steam power, which sends large quantities of its produce to the metropolis. This branch of the estancia was the original cause of the large herd of pigs which are to be seen there. A few of these latter were introduced simultaneously with the erection of the creamery in order that the skim milk and by-products of this should find some use. But now, with the increase of pig-breeding in general and the commencement of small, tentative shipments of Argentine pork to England, the herds of these have greatly increased, and probably will continue in proportion with the development of the industry. This new and promising market is being closely watched here, and the estancia is prepared to increase its herds still more at any moment when the time shall be ripe.

The agricultural extent of this estancia it is impossible to estimate or describe from a mere sight of its lands. At harvest time one may drive for almost interminable hours over the dead level plain, passing by the side of apparently endless sweeps of wheat, maize, and sky-blue stretches of linseed. Here, too, one may see the great reaping and binding machines that cut a swath of 14 feet, and others that elevate the wheat in a constant golden stream into

the accompanying harvest cart. But by far the most wonderful of all the agricultural implements to be met with on the estancia is the threshing machine with its artificial blast which sends ton after ton of straw hurtling through the air to form a stack at a given point in the vicinity. At such a period the population of La Germania numbers many hundreds, for, in addition to the regular Italian Colonists who farm a large portion of the land, the exigencies of the harvest demand the importation of much extra labour. But, as in the case of the lands themselves, it is impossible to estimate the numbers of these from the mere sight of them as they labour. A paddock the size of a large English farm, the cutting machines moving about the edge of the standing crops, and little dots of men scattered here and there in the distance—one may pass one, then another, and many more, and yet the same scene stretches out as far as the eye can see. Even the huge stacks that rise, mushroom like, in all directions, are apt to leave a confused impression by force of their very numbers. But one knows that they represent the thousands upon thousands of tons of wheat alone that the estancia yields in a single harvest. In order to house this and similar produce, enormous "galpons" (sheds) are studded in all directions over the land. These latter, as well as the great windmill and the array of pumping stations are erected by contract. There are repairing and blacksmiths' shops where "lame ducks" of every kind are dealt with. Every implement here, both great and small, is the latest of its kind. Indeed as an instance of the scientific

methods applied to the working of the property, it may be mentioned that an expert has been sent out from England for the special purpose of discovering which of the numerous species of grasses are best suited to the various portions of the land.

In order to control this vast estate, Mr. Robert Runciman, the manager, has under him a staff of half a dozen Englishmen. It is the duty of these latter to "revise camp"; that is to say, to ride from paddock to paddock to ascertain that nothing is wrong with livestock, cereals, pumps, or fence-lines. Beyond this, they superintend everything in general. Beneath these are another half dozen Englishmen in charge of the fine stock, while a small squad of "capatazes" or foremen, are directly concerned with the handling of the bulk of the men. The estancia has a private telephone between its office and railway station, and, as it is the practice in Argentina to send telegrams by telephone, its headquarters are thoroughly in touch with the outer world.

The estancia house is an imposing building, the interior of which suggests a country house at home, and before whose front stretches an extremely wide tesselated verandah. Near by is the house which accommodates the staff, a large verandahed building of red brick. To enumerate all the auxiliary buildings, however, would require a chapter in itself. About the main house are the pleasure gardens, with a tennis court, and some very fine avenues of trees. Beyond, there are several acres of fruit and vegetable gardens, while a little more remote again is the "monte," a large extent of woodland, every tree of

which, as is the case throughout the country, has been planted by the hand of man.

The Estancia Germania leaves an impression of amazement upon its beholders. So far as its area is concerned, a single stretch of crude camp of the same size would call for little comment. But here every single paddock that goes to constitute the thirteen leagues is accurately parcelled out and fenced, and the estate, down to its last furlong, is cultivated, and carefully tended. Indeed, the mere fact of the existence of such estancias is the best possible advertisement that Argentina can produce of her lands and their possibilities.

The Estancia Chapadmalal is situated in the South of Buenos Aires province at a distance of about ten miles from the seaside resort of Mar del Plata. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that its boundaries are thus situated, for since the estate is nine leagues in extent, its central point is naturally more remote. The estancia is the property of Señor Miguel Alfredo Martinez de Hoz, who stands as one of the most prominent figures not only in Argentine estancia life, but in the political and social world of the Republic as well.

Señor Martinez de Hoz is celebrated as a breeder of livestock rather than as an agriculturist. So far as horses are concerned, he devotes his chief attention to the breeding of hackneys. In this he is undoubtedly the most successful exponent of the art in South America. The enterprise is carried on here on a very large scale. The estancia possesses for instance, no less than 250 high class hackney brood

mares. The Shire strain of horses is also encouraged here in especial, there being 75 brood mares of this class. Youngsters of either of these strains hailing from Chapadmalal are marked throughout the Republic, and are wont to realise high prices.

Señor Martinez de Hoz takes an active share in the management of this estancia, and is himself considered one of the chief authorities in the country on all matters concerning livestock. Knowing England thoroughly, and a member of several British clubs and agricultural societies, he has a great belief in the efficiency of English methods of handling pedigree horses and cattle. In consequence of this, the majority of studgrooms and of those concerned with this large collection of fine stock are English. One of the commonest sights in the neighbourhood of Chapadmalal is that of colts being broken in to harness by clean-shaven, fresh faced men, in tweed clothes that are unmistakably British.

The quality of the cattle at Chapadmalal is on a par with that of the horses. The Cabaña (stud), moreover, is apparently not to be permitted to belie the reputation which it has earned. In common with other establishments of the kind, the prices paid here for imported bulls continue steadily upon the increase. The expense that these pedigree animals involve may be imagined when it is explained that Señor Martinez de Hoz recently paid 2,200 guineas for one of the Durham breed. This latter strain, by the way, is alone held to be worthy of the estancia. None other is admitted. There are no less than 18,000 of these Durham cattle upon the estate, which,

beyond these, carries 65,000 sheep. Indeed, everything upon this estancia is contrived most efficiently, and at the same time on a large scale. The storehouses are great, brick structures of imposing appearance. They are connected the one with the other by means of aerial wire ropes, along which fodder, and produce in general is passed at will. By this ingenious device an immense amount of labour is saved. The accommodation provided for the cattle is of the latest order, and the stabling of the stud horses is of a kind that might cause many an impoverished human being to wish himself equine. Indeed, so lavish is the care bestowed upon these animals that one is a little inclined to doubt their capacity to repay such infinite attention. But, if questioned upon the point, their owner's answer is emphatic.

The estancia house is in telephonic communication with the buildings of the outposts and also with the town of Mar del Plata, of which Señor Martinez de Hoz is "Comisionado Municipal." In many respects Chapadmalal is unique. The land in the neighbourhood of the homestead, for instance, has been cut up into comparatively small paddocks, each about equal in area to a moderate-sized English field. These have been planted about with privet, and with other British hedge-growing plants. Although these latter grow with greater profusion here than in their native soil, the effect of the whole resembles almost exactly, as has been intended, an English pastoral scene. In fact, it is a little difficult at first to refrain

from the idea that a small portion of Surrey or of Devon has been transported bodily to Argentina.

Near the house is the main "monte"—a large wood, with roads for driving purposes cut through it at right angles to each other. This has been so planted that, with each rectangular turn, the visitor is confronted by a different species of tree. Thus, after having driven along a road bordered by dense macrocarpa, a turn in the way will alter the surroundings entirely. It is poplar groves that line the path now, and these, at later crossways, will alternate with eucalyptus, willow, and a multitude of other species of timber. The cool and bracing atmosphere of the neighbourhood here has even tempted Señor Martinez de Hoz to plant young oak trees in considerable numbers. But these, apparently of more conservative nature than the rest of the European plants introduced at the estancia, would seem to make but poor headway. The amount of credit that is due for all this development of the picturesque becomes evident when it is explained that fifteen years ago there was, to all intents and purposes, not a stick upon the place.

The climate here permits the growth of such essentially Northern fruits as the gooseberry and the currant. These, although seldom attempted in the Republic, have been cultivated with distinct success at Chapadmalal, and the sight of the fruit enhances the European impression of the place. Pheasant rearing is a feature of the estancia, and both the incubators and large runs are wont to be fully occupied with the "longtails" that are eventually turned

house, and afterwards go to swell the "bags" of the shooting parties. There is in addition a complete farmyard—by which is usually understood that medley of animals supposed to haunt such spots—attached to the place. In this is included a model chicken farm, which contains a great number of interesting specimens of the breed.

"La Independencia" is a favourable specimen of an estancia of moderate extent. From a spectacular point of view the estate is fully as interesting as the two previously mentioned, for, since it cannot aspire to the magnitude of these others, its entire organisation and workings are the more readily discernible. "La Independencia" is situated in the province of Santa Fé within half a dozen miles of the small town and Railway station of Las Rosas. Mr. Francis Bradney, the owner, enjoys a very well deserved reputation as a breeder of livestock. The property, however, in common with the majority of others, is devoted in part to agriculture.

One can judge here of what good management and the rich Argentine soil can effect apart from the influence of the capital of hundreds of thousands of pounds which is essential to the manipulation of such estates as La Germania and Chapadmalal. One may ride through this compact property from end to end, and in the paddocks that lie between the occasional fields of cereals one may inspect the most "level" looking lot of horses and cattle that it is possible to conceive. So far as the latter animals are concerned, Mr. Bradney, in common with so many other Estancieros in Argentina, is somewhat prejudiced against

the white-faced Hereford strain. Cattle breeding at La Independencia, in consequence, is confined to the shorthorn class.

The horses here are carefully handled, and "mouthed" to English bits, thus knowing nothing of the rough and ready methods, and the jaw-breaking bit appliances so often met with in Argentina. The result of this is evident in the paddocks where the colts and fillies, together with their elders, far from displaying any fear of a passer by, press near about him with all the inquisitiveness of self-confident animals. It must be admitted that the strain of these latter is worthy of the attention bestowed upon them. Many, indeed, cross the ocean, to find a home in England.

The estancia has been especially successful in the breeding of polo ponies. The demand for a pony of the kind bred at "La Independencia" is considerable, and amongst the number are several that have fetched high prices in the British Isles, and that know the turf of Ranelagh and Hurlingham well. It is, however, a difficult matter to carry on this style of breeding on a large scale, owing to the "flukiness" and element of luck which enters into the matter. However excellent the breed, the question of size remains uncertain. A dam for instance, that has thrown an excellent pony that will pass well beneath the standard, may as likely as not upon a second occasion produce by the same sire a foal whose stature will eventually exceed the limit by a whole hand.

Mr. Bradney, residing as he does upon the estancia, employs purely native labour, not only for the general working of the estate but for that of the stud as well. The majority of the "peons" are of old standing here, and the result speaks excellently well for the capabilities of the Gaucho when led by one who understands him. The place is kept in the trimmest order from boundary to boundary; the live-stock is sleek to a degree, and the harness room is worthy of a corner in the Shires. "La Independencia" is an existing proof that a typically English atmosphere may be infused into the centre of Argentina, notwithstanding the fact that the Gaucho takes the place of the farm labourer. The homestead is surrounded by the usual "monte," and, as there is just a perceptible roll in the surrounding country, the aspect of the whole is extremely pleasant. The wells are planted about with trees, and the beauty of the spot is encouraged as well as its utility.

It may be objected that the three examples of estancias which I have given cannot be representative of the general average of such estates throughout the land, and that to show the bright side of the industry without the reverse is to attempt to produce an unfair impression of Argentine estancia life. It goes without saying that the examples which I have taken are not representative. But they serve to show of what the land is capable under intelligent management, and thus may be compared with instances of similar enterprise elsewhere. Whereas the history of failure is much the same all the world over, and con- -is is not only unprofitable, but to

all intents and purposes impossible. Argentina, no doubt, can produce as much evidence of neglect and of bad management as any other country, but as characteristics of the land, such instances would be of as little value here as in any other part of the world.

CHAPTER XX.

MENDOZA.

The irrigation system of the district—Aspects of the town—A pleasant city—Quaint hotels—Cabmen versus Tram-cars—An earthquake centre—Horrors of the past—Method of building—Mendoza vineyards.

Mendoza is undoubtedly the most picturesque town in Argentina. Lying at the very foot of the great chain of the Andes, it is the westernmost of the more important cities of the Republic. As a railway centre it is of considerable consequence, for it is here that the Great Western Railway, ceasing its career towards the Pacific Coast, turns abruptly to the North, and makes for San Juan. Its place is taken by the narrow gauge Transandine Railway which commences at this point to thread its lines towards the great peaks to the West.

Mendoza stands out as the centre of an extremely fertile stretch of territory. It has not always known such a pleasant setting, however. For the verdure and the groves of trees amidst which its houses nestle as well as for the rich green of the surrounding country it has to thank the ingenuity of man. Indeed, without that refreshing system of irrigation which permeates it, the soil of the district would lie barren, to all intents and purposes, of produce of any kind.

The history of this irrigation reaches far back, although the actual period of its commencement is

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unknown. There are some who assert that this harnessing of the waters dates back for a period of three hundred years or so. But, for all one knows, the craft may lay claim to a far remoter origin even than this. It is by no means improbable, in view of the evidence of their labours elsewhere, that the old Incas themselves were wont to delve into the mountain side and to draw down some small streams into the thirsty plain beneath. In which case the Spanish "Conquistadores," on their arrival, had merely to take the hint thus afforded, and to magnify the workings.

Until comparatively recent years each small district was wont to help itself to its own "toma" or intake of the waters from the Cordillera Rivers. In the neighbourhood to the South, as a matter of fact, which the River Diamante serves, this somewhat irregular method still obtains. The district, however, which lies more immediately about the town of Mendoza has been provided with a systemised scheme of irrigation for twenty years or so. To this end permanent weirs have been placed across the rivers Mendoza and Tunuyan that dam the streams of each from bank to bank. These were constructed at great expense by Italian engineers. Though they serve their purpose well enough, much trouble is occasionally caused in maintaining them during the summer months. For it is at this period that the rivers, swollen into flood by the melting snows of the Cordilleras above, come rushing down at terrific speed to fight hard for a free course and for liberty.

The workings of the system are taken in hand by

an irrigation department. The total length of canals taken from the water district beneath its charge, and from other portions of the rivers Mendoza, Tunuyan, Diamante, Atuel, together with some Arroyos (minor streams), amounts to 1,760 kilometers, or, in English figures, about 1,100 miles.

The total number of hectares that possess water rights, and, in consequence, are capable of producing crops is 250,000, the equivalent of which amounts to 1,000 square miles.

It may be mentioned here that the district of San Juan to the north is similarly served as regards its water supply. The dam across the River San Juan, however, was destroyed early in 1906 by overpowering floods.

To return to the irrigated districts of Mendoza, it is satisfactory to know that at the moment, at any rate, there is room for expansion in enterprise here. For, although the grape and other industries have spread enormously of late, the entire thousand square miles which constitutes the fertile area is not yet under cultivation.

I have referred to this system of irrigation ere commenting on the features of the town itself for the reason that it has a prior right; for, but for the former, the latter would never have known existence, at all events in its present form. Mendoza is a place of broad and pleasant streets, of canals, of poplars, of plazas and of parks. The most important of these latter is the Parque de lo Este, which is situated on high ground several hundred feet above the main level of the city. The credit for the laying out of this

is due to Señor Emilio Civit, ex-governor of the Province, and ex-Minister of Public Works of the Republic as well. The Park possesses a wealth of trees and shrubs of all kinds.

There is more evidence of street life in Mendoza than in the majority of the towns of Argentina, with the notable exception, of course, of Buenos Aires. The genial climate and pleasant surroundings here would seem to have impressed their mark upon the inhabitants of the place. The cafés alone afford some evidence of this, for they are wont to spread their tables and chairs in the open air beneath the shade of the trees with far more freedom than is usual in Argentina.

The swimming bath here is a model of its kind. Large as it is, with every possible convenience for diving and water gymnastics in general, the building affords the most delightful resort during the summer months. Indeed, after one has spent some while in its refreshing waters, and then has betaken oneself to the Plaza in order to hear the really excellent police band which performs daily the conclusion is inevitable that there are many worse spots than this far western town.

Perhaps the least pleasant places of all here are the hotels. The chief of these are the Hotel Club, and the Hotel de France. The exterior of each is all that it should be; the arrangements within are, however, in both cases surprisingly primitive. The bathroom of the latter, for instance, during the writer's stay afforded a startling instance of the uses to which such a chamber may be put. The bath itself was filled

with garments which were—I believe the domestic expression is "in soak." All about the floor were piles of other garments, many of the most intimate nature, which either had already been washed or were about to undergo that process. Mingled with these was a collection of skirts of all hues. Standing out in striking contrast to the rest of the objects was a large dapple-grey rocking horse, and a cage that was evidently intended for a parrot, but which, as luck would have it, was minus an occupant. In justice to the spot, it must be admitted that a space had been cleared upon the floor sufficient for the waters of a shower bath to descend without doing more than splash the surrounding objects of clothing. Yet, notwithstanding this somewhat pathetic type of homeliness, it is a matter of extreme difficulty to obtain a room at either hotel during the season.

One may notice in Mendoza that, although there is evidence of tramway lines upon the surface of several of the streets, there is no sign or vestige of a tramcar itself to be met with. The lines themselves, moreover, have a faint, somewhat obliterated appearance. The explanation is amazingly simple. The lines are there, but the cars that should have run upon them have ceased to exist. The position is the result of a fierce battle that raged some while ago between a tramway company that had started operations and the cabmen of the place. Enraged at the intrusion of so powerful an agent of competition, the latter fought a war of fares to the death. They lowered their rates to the level of those charged by the tramway company, and proclaimed triumphantly that, not being tied to

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rails, they would carry passengers to their very doors at a price in return for which their rivals could not do more than deposit them at the nearest point their route permitted, wherever that might be. And in the end, strange as it may appear, the individual cabmen drove the organised company and their cars from the field. They now point out the deserted lines as emblems of a glorious victory. It must be admitted that, as victors, they have proved themselves moderate towards the public, for the tariff of fares still remains surprisingly low. There is a custom prevalent among them here, moreover, which the Buenos Aires Jehu would do well to imitate. Upon every cab which is not engaged may be read the sign "libre." The intimation affords a great convenience. The driver of such a cab, too, unlike his brother of the Metropolis, makes no attempt to evade a journey which he may imagine does not suit him.

The Mendoza houses are almost without exception single-storied buildings. To enquire into the cause of this is to rake up the tragedy of the town. For even this lovely spot has its canker. It is earthquake-ridden. And the tremors, moreover, which continue to occur from time to time permit no forgetfulness of its lamentable past. It was in 1861 that the greatest disaster of the kind occurred, and the inhabitants of the town have been haunted ever since by the dread of a repetition of such a holocaust. One may still see the ruins of the great Cathedral whose walls and roof crashed downwards to overwhelm the crowd of suppliants that filled to overflowing the space beneath. One is told that it is necessary to do no more than dig

a few feet beneath the ground that lies between those massive fragments of upstanding masonry in order to bring human bones to the surface even now. But such a form of amusement is a little too grim.

Reports vary considerably concerning the actual extent of this disaster of 1861. The most generally accepted is that out of a population of 20,000, no less than 12,000 met with their deaths. Such figures, however, more especially when raked up from the somewhat vaguely chronicled past of Mendoza, must be accepted with all reserve. Indeed, when the percentage of deaths caused by the recent catastrophes in San Francisco and Valparaiso is taken into consideration, it is difficult to believe that anything like this number perished, whether from the upheaval of the earth itself or from the subsequent causes. For the tragedy was not confined to the direct effects of the earthquake. In those days of lawlessness there were many who desired nothing better than this abrupt shattering of all the forces of order. So, as though the horror of the earthquake were not sufficient, the convulsion was followed by an outbreak on the part of humanity almost equally terrible. Bands of armed wretches created wild havoc amid the ruins, murdering and plundering wherever they went, and many of their victims fell to the knife as they were in the very act of congratulating themselves upon their escape from the first danger.

There is fortunately little chance of the recurrence of the later scenes of this sinister drama. Mendoza, however, has no desire to witness any part of it again. For this reason, in addition to being single-storied,

the majority of the houses are built of special bricks. These are made of mud mixed with a generous proportion of straw or of light cane. The result affords an elasticity which is a considerable safeguard against the rending properties of an earthquake shock. The manufacture of these bricks is an interesting process to watch. Water is poured upon a patch of earth suitable for the purpose. When this has become fairly saturated one or more horses are made to circle round and round upon the spot until its surface has been churned to thick mud by their hoofs. The straw and cane is then thrown upon it, and the whole thoroughly mixed together. The final process consists in the placing of this substance in wooden moulds shaped to the form of bricks, which are then exposed to the heat of the sun to dry.

To turn to a less gloomy subject than that of earthquakes, the vineyards—these are undoubtedly the chief glory, indirectly of Mendoza, and directly of its surroundings. A drive through the country over which they stretch cannot fail to leave indelible impressions upon one who sets eyes on the scene for the first time. Indeed, I think the picturesque aspects of Mendoza and of its surroundings are best conveyed by a sketch of such an outing.

Starting from the centre of the town, the broad Avenue of San Martin lies bathed in the summer's heat. But for the row of poplars that line each side of the street, the whole of its length would feel the glow that, white and stifling, beats down at intervals through the gaps in the massive branches. As it is, the roadway is dappled with shade, while a small

canal trickles on either hand by the side of the tree trunks. The glimpse of moving waters makes the sense of shelter doubly pleasant. Still, the morning is hot, even for Mendoza, and the Argentine dust hovers over the cobbled street.

But allies of the shade and of the streams are now to be seen. A company of small boys is advancing slowly on either side of the street. Armed with poles to which are attached bucket-like scoops, they dip the latter into the small canals and fling the water across the thoroughfare. Thus two score or so of watery jets come tumbling inwards from either hand upon the surface of the road. The battle with the dust is in full swing; Mendoza is being watered. As the carriage that is bound for vineyard-land passes through the ranks of the boys the purified air fills one with gratitude towards their labours and the precious streams. But these latter are not done with yet. In the town itself one has driven over the solid culverts at street corners, carelessly oblivious that the streams exist. But in the outskirts they begin to demand acute and not altogether pleasant attention. As the cobbles give way to soft earth it is over a sheaf of boughs laid across an open stream that the carriage passes. As the town is left further behind the branches grow ever more attenuated. The loosely set, fragile bridges bend beneath the weight of the carriage, but the wheels roll and bump over them in an astonishing series of providential escapes.

The houses fall away and the poplar groves rise thickly on all sides. Here is a lowly forest of slender, graceful saplings; there is a broad clump of others

whose trunks have attained to the thickness of a foot or so; while further on rises an imposing collection of giant size, each standing well apart from the rest. There are millions of these poplars, each priced accurately according to its size. For in Mendoza the poplar industry is active, and the trees are grown, bought, and sold with the same readiness with which a wheat crop is dealt in. In the meanwhile one has reached the frontier vineyards. One may notice the vine leaves first in the midst of the poplars themselves. Here is a row of trees about whose bases the luxuriant foliage of the creeper clings ere it stretches out a broad green arm to clasp the next trunk. The lengthy passage of the tendrils across the air is inexplicable at the first glimpse. A nearer inspection, however, reveals a network of bamboo canes which connects the one trunk with the other. It is upon these that the vines are trained in all the beauty of their leafage and glowing fruit that hangs just beneath the more sombre foliage of the poplar. But the country of the grape, once entered, has more to show than this. There are the open vineyards, the squares of land dotted and intersected by the plants. Some there are, trained, as in France and Germany, upon a low prop; others, with a staff to climb as lofty as a hop pole, coil themselves high in the air. There are vines in rows clipped for all the world like privet hedges, and here are some again that are fashioned into standard bushes and at a little distance resemble nothing so much as very young pollard oaks.

But the chief glory of the Mendoza wine-grower lies in his walk—his covered street of vines. One of

these, with its stout framework of bamboo all but hidden beneath its soft covering, is a wonderful sight. One may enter a tunnel such as this, stretching, perhaps, for several hundred yards—a tunnel with walls of leaves through which burst the shafts of light. On either side and above the head hang the clusters of grapes, of purple or faint gold. And, looking backwards or forwards along the lane, it is the same—the soft bloom of the bunches, close set in their inverted pyramids, stretching to the point where they are lost in the white light at the tunnel's end.

Walking through the vineyards one may learn the reason of their luxuriance. Here, there, and everywhere, are tiny canals, of a yard, a foot, or even of slighter breadth. The little streams spread themselves in an amazing network of dainty irrigation, one speeding freely along, another dammed in for a space by a miniature water-gate. It is difficult to regard this lilliputian system of canal and lock as other than a pretty toy scheme. But it is for the sake of these rivulets that the huge permanent weir on the Mendoza river has its existence. The icy torrent that comes thundering downwards from the snow peaks of the Andes upon the horizon has been dammed from bank to bank for no reason but this. The waters have been tamed, warmed in the lower heat, and sent flying in all directions—to work. Hence the poplar, the vine, and the asparagus, onion, and potato that thrive between its rows. The prosperity of Mendoza is bound up in its network of little streams. It would be an ill hour for the town in the shadow of the Andes should they cease to flow.

CHAPTER XXI.

MENDOZA.

The Wine Industry—Its development—Method of importing wines—Characteristics of the wines—Their commercial aspects—Señor Kalless' establishment—Gigantic vats—Varieties produced—The sobriety of the Mendozan—The grape industry—Fruit canning—Argentine fruit cultivation—Questions of quantity and quality—Prospects under altered conditions.

The development of Mendoza's chief industry, viticulture, although it has been extremely rapid of late, has by no means yet approached the limits of its possibilities. So far as the extent of cultivation is concerned, the phenomenal increase in this is sufficiently evidenced by the fact that the Great Western Railway, well equipped and engineered though it is, was totally unable to cope with the transport of wine and grapes which the vintage brought to its doors in the early part of 1906.

The greater part of the wine produced is not of a high quality, it must be admitted. Argentine vintages have not yet become fashionable among the wealthier classes of the Republic. In districts other than the neighbourhood of Mendoza itself and of its fellow viticultural district of San Juan polite society will tolerate no beverage beneath the rank of the finest European growths. The average wine of Mendoza appeals as yet only to the tastes of the masses. Owing to the scientific methods now employed, however, the quality of the home product is steadily improving.

Indeed, among the number there are some extremely palatable brands already in existence, and there can be no doubt that in time to come the prejudice of the more prominent Argentines against the wines of the country will be removed. Such, at all events, has proved the case in Chile, whose vintages are deservedly popular amongst all classes alike.

Mendoza claims that it can grow any conceivable type of grape with equal facility. Judging by the great variety of magnificent specimens that is to be met with, the claim would seem a sufficiently just one. A large quantity of the finest European vines have been introduced of recent years. These, it may be remarked, are not imported directly to the Republic. They are first shipped to Chile, where they undergo a period of acclimatisation, on the completion of which they are sent to take their place amongst the vineyards of Mendoza.

The lot of a vineyard proprietor here would seem an enviable one. Indeed, under normal conditions his profits are such that the continual spreading of the industry is not to be wondered at. The average yield, for instance, of an hectare (a little less than half an acre) of vine land may be taken at from 300 to 400 quintals. The average price which the grapes have recently realised per quintal is four dollars, fifty centavos. Thus the season's return for this half-acre or so of land will range from 1,350 to 1,800 dollars—a figure which permits of an extremely pleasant margin of profit to the proprietor. So far as wine is concerned, it is possible to make as much as 70 litres of the beverage from 100 kilos of grapes.

The district produces a far greater proportion of red wine than of white. Until late years the product has been characterised by the heavy properties of the kind possessed by the wines of Tarragona, Algeria, and other districts of coarser growths. A delicacy, however, has now been attained in many of the wines, more especially in those of the white variety, which stamps them as of quite another order.

As an example of the progressive wine manufacturing establishments which now abound in the neighbourhood of Mendoza that of Señor Carlos Kalless may be given. Situated in the midst of its own vineyards, the main scene of operations is a busy one, for all is conducted here upon a large scale. The vat chambers alone afford sufficient evidence of this. One may pass from one room to another, to be confronted by row upon row of stupendous casks. Here, for instance, are twenty in a line each capable of holding 26,000 litres. A little further on is a second collection of seventeen of varying sizes, the capacity of the largest being 54,000 litres. Beyond, are more chambers yet, each filled with its complement of giant vessels.

The later type of vats, however, which are also to be met with here, differ widely from these corpulent wooden casks. With walls built of cement, and with their interiors lined with glass, they are themselves the size of small living rooms. That this description is not exaggerated may be gathered from the fact that one of them is constructed to hold no less than 125,000 litres. Beneath are aqueducts through which a stream of water passes when the process of fermen-

tation is in full swing. By this means the temperature is maintained at the necessarily low degree.

The grape press here, too, is of the most modern order. Situated beneath the level of the ground, it is designed to receive the grapes in the simplest fashion possible. In the centre of the cement flooring above is a " shoot " into which the grape carts as they arrive discharge their cargo. This latter at the finish of its descent finds itself within the embrace of the crushing machine, an ingenious contrivance that, amidst its various functions, cunningly manages to separate the stalks from the fruit.

The variety of wines produced at this establishment is astonishing. Beyond the ordinary *vins du pays*, some of the better class specimens of which are extremely good, there is scarcely a European brand of which the equivalent is not forthcoming. Sherry, Malaga, Port, Bordeaux, Burgundy, Muscatel, Hock, Moselle, and even Champagne emerge from the vats at will. It is not a little wonderful to conceive samples of the viticulture of five lands, Spain, Portugal, France, Germany, and Italy, all born and bred in the restricted area of a single group of vineyards. The most successful of all is that of the Sauterne type, a variety to which the grapes here would seem to lend themselves the most readily.

Señor Kalless has expended his energies more particularly in the demonstration of those finer qualities of wines which it is possible for the Mendoza vineyards to yield. Nevertheless, although the results are altogether excellent, the reception which the more delicate specimens have met with at the hands of the

public has proved disappointing so far. It is at all events, altogether out of proportion to the number of gold and silver medals with which its products have been rewarded. Still, it is likely enough that the day will come when these wines, unlike mankind, will attain to the rank of prophets in their own country.

These more aristocratic specimens are kept in cask for three years prior to bottling, as is the case in Europe. The common varieties, however, are sent out to be consumed almost as soon as the process of fermentation is complete.

In instancing Señor Kalless' establishment it may be mentioned that this concern forms but one of many, all of which at the present moment are in an extremely flourishing condition. The most dreaded enemy of the vines is here, as elsewhere, the hail-storm. But, although much damage is annually caused here and there by hailstones, it is seldom that the crop is seriously affected in the main.

The inhabitants of Mendoza, notwithstanding the wine-producing country in which they dwell, would seem blessed with temperaments little less sober than those of their brethren in the non-viticultural districts. Should a slip from virtue occur, it is almost invariably upon a Sunday that it may be looked for. Curiously enough, the process of street watering on a Monday morning will reveal whether such has been the case or not. There are times when, in place of the usual youthful sprinklers, one may see a collection of glum-faced men, who fling the water upon the roadway with an ill grace. They are not volunteers, but pressed men. Their task is the result of the previous

day's debauch—a municipal punishment of the most practical order.

Equal in importance to the wine industry here is that of the grape—the fruit pure and simple. The Mendoza grape is peculiarly luscious, and the bunches of nearly every variety that is grown here attain an enormous size. During the vintage special grape trains are run to all parts of the Republic. To such an extent has the industry spread that the amount of the fruit now transported in a season runs into many thousand tons.

A general fruit canning business has been founded here by Señor Andres Bacigalupi. Three thousand tins of various kinds of fruit are turned out from this daily. The establishment has now been in existence for a period of four years, and it has undoubtedly made great strides in every direction. Experiments are continually being made here with the juice of fruit, and the beverages obtainable from these. Some of the results are extremely satisfactory.

As regards the cultivation of fruit in general, Mendoza, although extremely prolific, is little more favoured than the rest of the country. Indeed, Argentina, throughout almost its entire length and breadth, is blessed with a climate and soil marvellously adapted to this purpose. The range, moreover, is great, including as it does the sub-tropical growths of Corrientes and other Northern districts as well as the pear, the strawberry, and all other products of the temperate clime. For the great abundance of fruit which the land now yields the enterprising Jesuits of bygone centuries have to be thanked. It was they

who brought out the seeds and sowed them about the scattered settlements of those days. Indeed, such is the irony of time's workings, the site of not a few of these dead and forgotten settlements may be traced by the trees which alone mark the spot.

The chief fruit of Argentina is the peach. This latter is far more common throughout the Republic than are apples in England. It grows, indeed, with a profusion which probably surpasses that of any other part of the world. There is scarcely an establishment, however humble, that has not its peach orchard in those neighbourhoods where the space permits. If it be lacking, at all events, the reason is decidedly other than want of opportunity. Nectarines are almost equally abundant. But, for the matter of that, there is scarcely a European fruit that does not thrive most amazingly here. Apples, pears, plums, quinces, melons, oranges, lemons, figs, strawberries, cherries—all these, and many other varieties besides, load the trees in this fortunate land.

The Argentine is exceedingly—and in many cases justly—proud of this wealth of fruit that is his. It is his boast that the country is capable of producing almost every conceivable species, and that ere long Europe will be flooded by this produce. So far as quantity is concerned, nothing is more possible. Huge orchards are spread broadcast about the land; fleet upon fleet of vessels are continually passing down the rivers bearing the produce in hundreds and thousands of tons. The quantity grown, moreover, is continually on the increase, and, as a matter of fact, exportation to Europe has already commenced.

Whether this commerce, however, will attain to the dimensions expected of it is a little doubtful under present circumstances. Fruit growing has suffered in one respect through the very facility with which the trees have consented to sprout. Having thrived so greatly of their own accord, they have been left to work out their own destiny practically unaided. The result is abundance, and, frequently, great size, but mediocrity in the flavour of many fruits.

The peach itself, from which so much is hoped, differs as a rule in several respects from the European variety. The average Argentine specimen is far tougher both in flesh and skin. The latter is wont to be peeled with a knife in precisely the same way in which an apple is pared. As a fruit, it is sufficiently pleasant and acceptable, but it cannot compare for one moment with the peach, rare as it is, that we know in England. There are some orchards which produce notable exceptions to this rule, it is true, but they are so few and far between that the percentage they represent to the bulk of the crop is utterly insignificant.

Oranges grow with similar readiness and profusion. The trees attain to a great size, and are frequently overweighted with the golden globes. In many districts, however, a number of the trees have been neglected to such an extent that the fruit, though magnificent to look upon, has become bitter and sour to the taste. Pears, too, though of stupendous dimensions, are frequently riddled with flaws which a little care in the cultivation would easily prevent. Indeed, the grapes of Mendoza and San Juan repre-

sent probably the only fruit which has been brought to a point approaching the limits of its perfection.

So far as the rest of the fruit is concerned, nothing beyond a certain amount of reasonable attention to the requirements of the trees is necessary in order to produce the most important results. A number of those interested in the industry are, however, now commencing to bestir themselves, and there are indications that a new era of scientific treatment is at hand. For those possessed of the benefit of a Californian training the field that offers itself here is a strikingly promising one.

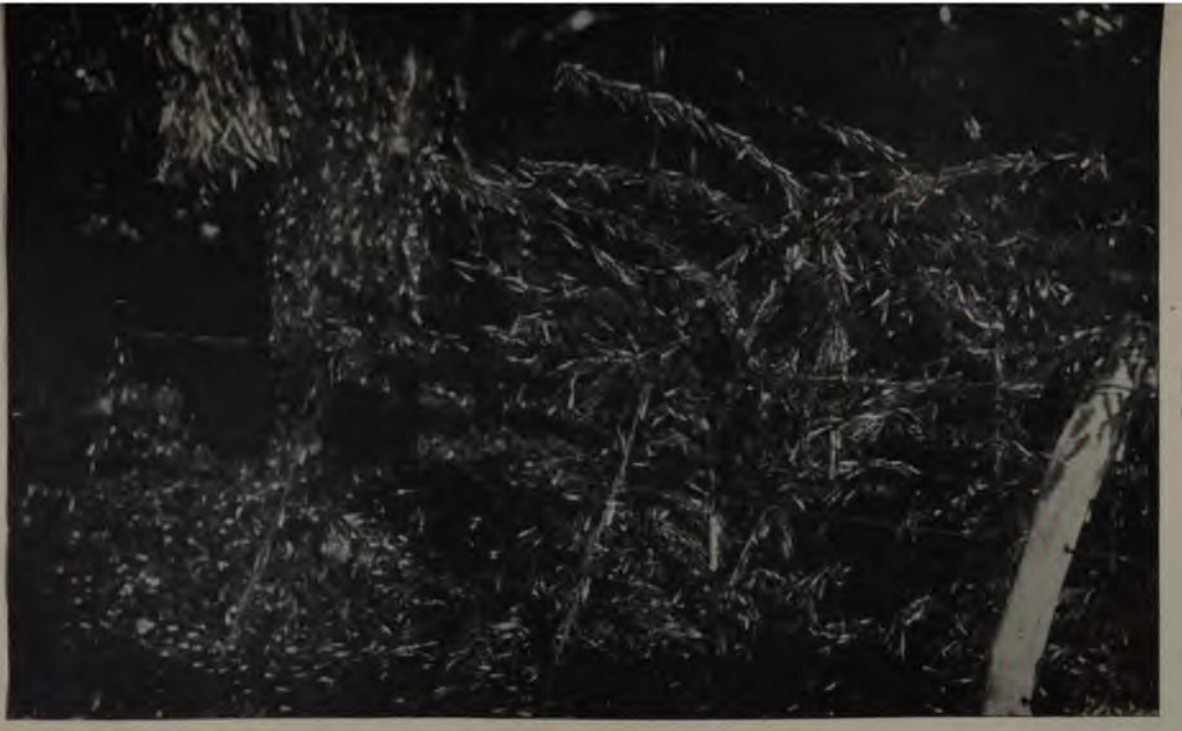
The advantages that must attend the exportation of really good fruit from Argentina to Europe are obvious. With the reversal of the seasons south of the Equator, strawberries are wont to ripen in December, and the remainder of the fruits in the corresponding months. In view of the facilities of transport now afforded, the manner of the reception of this produce, possessing the rare merits of being cheap and out of season at the same time, cannot be doubted.

CHAPTER XXII.

SOME INDUSTRIES AND PECULIARITIES.

Mendoza poplars—Woods of San Luis—The Chaco timber industry—Quebracho wood—Transport in the Chaco—Peculiarities of the district—Strange fish—Nomadic Indians—Other inhabitants—Their manners and customs—Animal life of the Chaco—Patagonian Indians—Travel in Patagonia—The tide at Gallegos—Argentine mining—The Famatina mines—Some native implements of the country.

It has been said that the great Central plains of Argentina are for the most part entirely devoid of native timber. Of those trees which have been introduced into the country the poplar has proved the most valuable for commercial purposes. The wood of this is not particularly durable, it is true. But, failing a better, it serves well enough for the purpose of rafters, posts, and the like. The poplar-growing industry has now attained considerable proportions, and is perhaps principally evident in the neighbourhood of Mendoza. The trees are here planted in groves at regular intervals in straight lines. Thus the proprietors of such groves are enabled to take a more or less accurate census of the number which constitutes their stock. The totals of these latter are sufficiently imposing, exceeding in some cases half a million trees. The capital that these poplars represent, too, is considerable. On a very rough basis, one may estimate one dollar per year of its growth as the value of a trunk. Thus the worth of a four-year-old poplar would be four dollars. A similar system of



LOCUSTS ON WIRE FENCE AND SHRUBS.

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cultivation is occasionally employed in the case of some other trees, but the poplar industry alone has assumed any real commercial importance.

Travelling due westwards from Buenos Aires, the dead level of the plain is first broken—at a distance of two-thirds of the breadth of the Republic—by the hills and low mountains of the province of San Luis. The district is distinguished from the surrounding country by the fact that it abounds in hard and useful timber. Here the forests of Algarrobo and Calden produce wood of a toughness that renders it capable of withstanding almost any amount of wear and tear. In order that they should harden yet more, it is usual to place the logs in the salt pools and lakes of the neighbourhood before using them. Of these two woods the Calden is slightly the more durable. Both species of these trees attain to a considerable size. One, indeed, of the largest has been known to yield fifty cubic metres of wood. As each of these cubic metres is worth twelve dollars, it may be imagined that the tree was a valuable one.

The Algarrobo is a useful tree in more respects than one. It gives out a fruit which, shaped like a long pea, hangs from its foliage. This, falling in abundance to the ground, affords useful fodder for stock in winter. Both the Algarrobo and the Calden, as is usually the case with trees that produce durable timber, are of slow growth. No measures, it may be said, have yet been adopted for the re-planting of those portions of the forest which have been cut. It would seem possible that, notwithstanding the present

[illegible] and this region of the future [illegible]

[illegible] is that of San Luis, valuable as [illegible] it will be surpassed in importance [illegible] the mineral districts of the Northern [illegible] the Chaco. There is the home of [illegible] wood, a timber that is rapidly [illegible] is throughout the world. As may be [illegible] from its name, Quebracho is an extremely [illegible] wood. For sleepers and fencing [illegible] timber [illegible] is ideal material. Put [illegible] it will endure for a period of thirty [illegible]

Until recently the forests of the Chaco were [illegible] for no other reason than the manufacture of [illegible] is done. A local industry, however, has now [illegible] them for its own, and it has become a matter [illegible] to obtain either sleepers or fencing [illegible] of the Quebracho wood. This is due to the [illegible] of the valuable properties as tannin that the Quebracho forests contain. Since then the demand for the timber has become enormous, and but little of it can be spared for any other purpose. This is hardly to be wondered at when it is considered that a specimen of the kind favourable for extract purposes will yield as much as twenty-five per cent. of tannin. The tannin thus derived, moreover, is of an extremely powerful order. It is stronger in its action, for instance, than that obtained from oak-bark or from the mango tree.

Many companies have recently sprung into being for the purpose of working these forests. They are

wont either to export the timber in bulk or to extract the tannin locally in factories which they have built for the purpose. This industry is no ephemeral one. It has undoubtedly come to stay, as the vast forest lands are, humanly speaking, inexhaustible.

The greatest difficulty to be contended with in connection with this timber industry of the Chaco is that of transport. Several of the Quebracho companies have constructed their own private railways, usually of a 60 or 75 centimetre gauge. Some of these are planned so as to connect with the French Railway Company which runs from Santa Fé to La Sabana; others have the river Parana as their goal.

These railways are fed by bullock transport, and it is here that the chief difficulty lies. In dry weather the surface of the roads is hard and good. At such periods, on the other hand, water becomes very scarce. In wet weather the disadvantages are considerably accentuated. Then, it is a case of "water, water everywhere." The roads become impassable to the heavily-laden wagons, and all transport is necessarily suspended. The bullocks suffer much, too, from illness and pestilential insects. Indeed, the life of a bullock here is by no means a happy one, for in addition to these difficulties, there are districts in the Chaco in which fodder is very scarce and hard to obtain. It may be mentioned that the roads over which they have to travel are mere tracks which frequently are obliged to make wide detours in order to avoid the many Esteros (swamps) which abound in the country, and which are sometimes of very great extent.

It is only by the construction of cheap light railways that these difficulties of transport can be overcome. The object of these is naturally to reduce to a minimum the system of expensive and arduous bullock cartage. As one of the most efficient of these light railways, that belonging to Messrs. Freund and Duffield, of Buenos Aires, may be cited as a favourable example of the type. This, serving the district about Florencia, was built especially for the transport of Quebracho and other timber. The gauge of this is 60 centimetres, and the weight of rails 7 kilos per metre. But in spite of these light rails and of the narrowness of gauge, loads of 9 tons per wagon are easily dealt with, and trains of 100 tons drawn by 6½ ton locomotives Indeed, the railway is an undoubted success, and redounds much to the credit of its enterprising builders.

The Chaco contains much that is curious in nature. The manner in which the forests themselves are distributed about the land is not a little curious, and has given rise to much fruitless speculation. The surface of the Chaco may be described as consisting of alternate plain and woodland. But that which marks the huge belts of forest as out of the ordinary is the abruptness by which their boundaries are marked. The edges, in fact, of these are as cleanly cut and as level as those of a well-planned plantation in an English park. The line is drawn with remorseless exactitude. Beyond it stretches the smooth plain, with not a tree upon it to break the severity of the contrast.

It is a land of strange water courses. Broad

COMMENCEMENT OF CIVILISATION—LA COLONIA, PATAGONIA.

HAIL COVE, HAIL ISLAND, MESSIER STRAITS, PATAGONIA.

CAMP AT BAKER RIVER, PATAGONIA.

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streams that have flowed all the way from the Andes in the full light of day burrow beneath the earth here and continue their course underground. In other districts a clay soil that is practically impervious brings about a phenomenon that is precisely the opposite. The latter is most evident where a rough cellar has been dug beneath a settler's house. In the districts in which this curious soil is to be met with, although the surface of the ground may be puddled and soaked, the unbricked cellar beneath will remain perfectly dry.

Some other phenomena which occur in the Chaco are so remarkable that, were they not known in at least two other parts of the world, one would feel some diffidence in narrating them. During heavy rainfalls, for instance, it is by no means unusual for small fish of about two inches in length to descend from the clouds. Equally marvellous, fish of from eight to twelve inches in length are to be found in the pools caused by these heavy downpours. These pools are utterly inaccessible to any watercourse or river, and the ground which they cover has been in a dry and parched condition for months previous to the rain. It is believed that they must sink several feet into the mud when the water dries up, and that they lie embedded in the earth to await the next rainfall. These fish, however, show no indication that they belong to an amphibious species.

The Chaco is the least known of the Argentine territories. Travel in the interior is attended not only by natural difficulties, but also by the risk of attack at the hands of the Indians. There are many

nomadic tribes of these who in their peaceful interludes exist by fishing and hunting. Their disposition, however, is hostile, and they still occasionally attack outlying settlers for the sake of plunder.

The civilised inhabitants of the territory are of half-breed Indian origin. These employ the Guarany Indian tongue in preference to the Spanish language. Their standard of virtue may be termed an easy one. An independent manner and a rooted objection to labour of any kind are among the traits that characterise them. The morals of these somewhat coarse lotus-eaters are at a low ebb. Of a contented disposition, they exist with perfect happiness in their mud "ranchos." These consist of a single room, in which the entire household, irrespective of age and sex, is wont to sleep, and which has to one side a "lean-to" utilised as a kitchen and reception room. As an occupation, the drinking of maté—Paraguayan tea—suits them admirably. The "baile" (dance), however, affords them their chief delight. At one of these, enlivened by a plentiful supply of beer and caña, they will dance with the utmost glee to the strains of an old concertina or guitar.

As a sporting district the Chaco is probably the best in Argentina. It abounds in various kinds of game, both large and small. Partridges, wood-pigeon, and snipe are plentiful. There is the "Pato real"—a species of musk duck which will turn the scale at fifteen or sixteen pounds—and almost every conceivable kind of water fowl in addition. Among the forest birds the "Pavo del Monte," a species of wild turkey, is to be met with. This bird, by the way, affords the

most excellent eating. The Chaco is also the home of the Osprey, whose plumes are so much in request in the centres of fashion.

Big game is to be met with in these Northern districts to an extent now quite unknown in the central provinces of the Republic. Beyond the deer and ostrich, there is the tapir, ant-eater, wild pig, jaguar, and the lone wolf—a creature that has never been known to live in captivity. There are, besides, many species of tiger cats and foxes. Poisonous snakes are extremely numerous, and huge pythons are to be found in the swamps.

The waterways teem with fish. The flesh of the majority, however, is of a muddy and unsavoury nature. Among these may be mentioned the "Palometa," which grows to an enormous size, and is addicted to an occasional bite at a bather.

In order to meet with other full-blooded Indians in a similarly primitive condition to those of the Chaco, as well as with forests of equal magnitude, it is necessary to journey through the Republic to a point as far south as the country we have dealt with lies to the north of it. The existence of these Patagonian Indians, though more peaceful, is almost as crude as that of the Chaco tribes. Many of them would seem to have altered their habits remarkably little since the days when Darwin travelled in their midst. These, as will be seen from the photograph, still construct for a dwelling-place a species of rough wigwam of branches shaped as nearly as possible to the form of a low dome, upon which grasses are flung.

Travel in Santa Cruz and upon the Chilian side of

these latitudes is not a matter to be taken lightly. There are immense tracts in the territory of Santa Cruz, for example, about which very little is known. To travel across these entails considerable hardship, as it is impossible to obtain food or provisions en route. I am indebted for the photographs which depict this portion of the country to Mr. W. Norris. This gentleman is the manager of an area of 3,600 square miles of land—equivalent to more than the half of Yorkshire—which the Compañia Explotodora del Baker have taken in hand. The territory lies to the south-west of the large Buenos Aires lake, and is thus actually situated in Chile. In order to reach it, it was, and still is, necessary to disembark at Santa Cruz, and journey, pioneer fashion, across the continent. To this end a considerable mule train is indispensable, as, travelling through a wild and provisionless land, the expedition must necessarily be self-supporting. The journey, moreover, owing to the numerous natural hindrances and obstacles, endures for almost three months. For, in addition to the tracts of forest, plain, and mountain, there are rivers to be dealt with. The Baker itself, as the photographs show, is broad and navigable for the most part. But even here, owing to the falls, portages are necessary at times, while the smaller streams have to be forded or swum. Indeed, in view of the arduous toil of the journey, it is not surprising to learn that on several occasions Mr. Norris has had the unpleasant doubt forced upon him as to whether the provisions would last out or fail, in which latter case the untimely end of the entire expedition was certain.

The rise and fall of the tide upon the Argentine Coast in these latitudes is stupendous. At Gallegos, at the southern boundary of Santa Cruz territory, the difference between high and low water is no less than 54 feet. This state of affairs renders the docking arrangements of the few steamers that touch at the port a simple enough matter. At high tide they are run gently ashore. When the ocean has receded they are left high and dry. The cargo is then unloaded with the utmost dispatch in order that the business may be completed ere the return of the disturbing tide.

It is in Chubut, to the North of Santa Cruz, that the Boer Settlement has been founded. As agriculturalists they are succeeding admirably. Their surroundings, however, both official and social, differ so entirely from those which obtain in the Transvaal and Orange River Colony that whether the new settlers will ever become truly acclimatised is open to doubt.

Argentina is undoubtedly rich in minerals. Even throughout the Andes, in those spots where no workings exist, and in Patagonia one may find proofs of this, and traces of silver, copper and gold. The past history of the land tells a plain tale of the treasure that has been wrung from it. The future, in all probability, will have some tremendous revelations to make, but, though many ancient workings have been discovered, the site of the bulk of these mines of apparently fabulous wealth has been completely lost. There are yet some remote spots, just over the border to the west of the Andes, where the priests are wont to receive gold in certain quantities from the Indians.

But, these, perhaps wisely, hold their secret inviolate. Indeed, I have it on the authority of a leading mining engineer of the district that a small expedition which set out with a view to solving the mystery failed to return.

The Argentine mines which are at present being worked lie chiefly in the provinces of Mendoza, Catamarca, and Rioja. Probably the most important and apparently the most flourishing of these are the Famatina mines in the latter province. The ore here contains silver, copper, and gold, and the Government has constructed at its own expense a marvellous aerial ropeway which connects the mines with the railway at Chilicito. This ropeway cost £170,000 to construct, but the advantages of transport to the mines are, of course, incalculable. This, to say nothing of other undertakings of the kind, is surely enough to acquit the Argentine Government of want of enterprise.

The history of these and of many other mines would prove a fascinating one—if one knew it. They date back to the Conquistadores, and, before that, to the Incas themselves. Of these latter, unfortunately, the traces have disappeared to an astonishing extent. There are ancient bronze instruments and the like to be met with in plenty. But the evidences of the more intimate life of those intelligent, peaceful, and highly civilised Indians that were wont to cross the Andes and to busy themselves in the Northern and Western provinces of Argentina are sadly lacking, considering the few hundred years that have lapsed since they thrived.

In the Chaco arrowheads of pure white crystal are

to be met with. There is some interesting pottery here, too, in which each vessel is shaped in the form of a bird. Other sets comprise the shapes of a variety of animals. But these are comparatively modern. Here, too, one may meet with a "sinker" employed for fishing, a stone disc hollowed in the centre to permit the passage of the line, which is of exactly the same pattern as some paleolithic specimens of the kind which I have seen recovered from the site of a Swiss lake-dwelling of the stone age. In Chubut, too, are stone axes which resemble the paleolithic weapons of Europe.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SOME ARGENTINE CUSTOMS AND FEATURES.

Some Camp dishes—Yerba Maté—Characteristics of the beverage—The Mirage—The Camp hawker—Travel on the plains—The coach—The camp owl—Its peculiarities—The obsession of the bird—A lost friend—Traffic on the main rivers—The fleet of Nicholas Mihanovich.

Up to the present the Argentine has concerned himself very little with the various schools and fashions in diet. In the camp he is an eater of meat, pure and simple. The days have long since gone by, it is true, when an animal was wont to be slaughtered in order that it might provide the wherewithal for a single meal, and when the rest of the carcase was left upon the plain as a present for the carrion fowl. Yet, though more economical methods have supervened, meat remains yet the staple food. Until recent years, notwithstanding the richness of the soil, few, with the exception of some British Estancieros, have troubled about the cultivation of vegetables. There is an increasing tendency now, however, to add these latter luxuries to meals, and the kitchen garden is becoming a feature of the small native estancia as well as elsewhere.

The standing Camp dish is the "Asado." This may consist of any portion—for preference the ribs—of cattle, or even of sheep, roasted. One may obtain "Asado" in a Buenos Aires restaurant, it is true. In which case, however succulent it may be, it is as

BIG FALL, BAKER RIVER, PATAGONIA.

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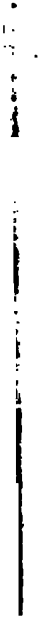

characterless amongst dishes as is a caged robin amongst birds. In order to estimate the true "Asado" it should be prepared by Gauchos, and partaken of on its native plain. The method of its cooking is simplicity itself. A huge iron skewer is stuck in the ground at an angle, so that the meat upon it rests over a blazing wood fire. Then, when the fare is sufficiently roasted, one of the more homely uses of the Gaucho's large knife becomes apparent. With it each slices off the morsel he desires from the spit, and the meal proceeds with a most delightful *sans gène*.

"Asado con cuero" is a dish afforded by beef cooked in similar fashion. But in this case the hide has been suffered to remain, and the meat is roasted in this latter. The dish was formerly far more common than is at present the case. Indeed, in view of the increased value of the hide, the fact of being offered an "Asado con cuero" may be taken as a special compliment. "Puchero," another national dish, not altogether unlike Irish stew, is characteristic of the entire country rather than of the Camp alone.

"Yerba Maté" ... portant part not only ... uring republics as ... ed, there can be no doubt that the popular ... beverage has gone far towards the counter-act... of any deleterious effects which the régime of meat, and nothing but meat, might have produced. "Yerba Maté," or "Maté," as it is colloquially termed, though the latter name indicates nothing beyond the gourd, is the tea of the country. Indeed, it is not too much

to say that not only to the Gaucho but to many European Camp men as well, the "maté" bowl is as essential as food. The tree from which "maté" is obtained is cultivated in Paraguay and in Lower Brazil. The ends of its branches and young shoots are cut off, prepared, and roasted. When infused, it is served in a round "maté," or gourd, from a hole in which a silver or metal tube projects. It is through this that the drinker draws up the contents of the bowl.

There are two kinds of the beverage: the "Dulce" (sweet) and the "Amargo" (bitter). The flavour of the former appeals to the majority as of rather too sickly a nature, and the latter is by far the more popular of the two. It may be said of "maté" that it leaves a doubtful impression upon the mind of him who tastes it for the first time. A second trial is sufficient to demonstrate many of its good qualities, and after half a dozen or so of experiences there are few indeed who do not sing its praises. As a matter of fact, the number of occasions on which one meets with the friendly "maté" bowl during a journey through the Camp is enormous. It serves both as a drink of welcome and as a stirrup cup. One is frequently awakened in the morning, moreover, to find by the bedside a bearer of the hospitable gourd. Amongst the Gauchos it is customary to partake of it in a solemn silence of appreciation. One of these, by the way, will probably object strenuously to using a glass from which another has drunk, but for some reason or other the "maté" tube inspires no such delicacy. The same bowl and tube will be filled,

emptied, and refilled, until it has gone the round of the company.

In Buenos Aires and other large towns the beverage has fallen completely out of fashion. Although still adhered to by the more humble classes there, the wealthy will consent to indulge in nothing less cosmopolitan than tea and coffee. In many respects this is to be regretted, for "maté," as a healthful stimulant, will compare favourably with either of these latter. Indeed, its invigorating powers are astonishing. In the Camp nothing is held to be its equal in making a fresh man of a tired one who has spent a hard day in the saddle. These claims, moreover, are not in the least exaggerated, for its medicinal properties are considerable. There has been an attempt, I believe, to introduce the beverage into Europe, but with what result I know not.

The mirage is no infrequent phenomenon upon the Camp. Its effect is as beautiful here as elsewhere. One may be driving along a road in the open plain, and may see to the front a small lake that stretches directly across it, flanked by a grove of the shadiest trees. The sight may stagger a stranger to the district for a while, but not for long. For, in the accepted manner of mirages, the vision will give way soon enough to the reality of the unbroken land. But there are mirages on a more ambitious scale as well—if one may use the term in connection with such phenomena. There are times when a lengthy stretch of the horizon lies beneath some such spectacle as an island-studded sea, utterly glorious and fairylike. In which case the sight, from its very grandeur, deceives

no one. One knows well enough that at the back of that mystic picture are sleek Durham cattle, champing very solid grass.

Should a traveller upon the Camp notice in the distance that which appears to him a large, square box on wheels drawn by a couple or more of horses, he may know the vehicle for a Camp-hawker's wagon. The man in charge of the queer-looking vehicle is, as a rule, a stolid Turk. For some reason or other the sons of Islam have launched themselves heart and soul into this trade. The sight of them here is as surprising as that of the Hindu pedlars in New Zealand. It is the business of the camp-hawker to travel from estancia to estancia, whether humble or great, and sell what he may until his wares give out, when he returns whence he came for a further supply. His class is, naturally enough, far from beloved by the local storekeepers. Indeed, were it not for the stringent laws which now prevail, there is little doubt that these enterprising Turks would scarcely find their profits compensate for the attendant risks.

The usual method of long distance travelling where no railway is available is by coach. This is usually drawn by four or more horses. The body of the vehicle is set high, a precaution which tends to keep the interior dry in the event of there being streams to ford. The conveyance is wont to be covered with a hood, the sides of which may be raised or lowered at will. The native drivers are well skilled in the matter of avoiding ruts and inequalities in the road. Nevertheless, it is necessary to be prepared for a considerable amount of swaying and swerving, for all

COCHRANE RIVER—HORSES SWIMMING STREAM.

BRIDGE OVER RIO DEL SALTO, PATAGONIA.

TRANSANDINE RAILWAY, USPALLATA STATION.

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the powerful springs with which these coaches are fitted. But so much is visible upon a drive of the kind that such minor inconveniences are soon forgotten.

It is seldom that the broad plains of the camp lapse into utter loneliness. Even in those remoter districts where the haunts of men lie far apart, the wealth of bird life that abounds on all hands preserves the scene from that brooding solitude which must otherwise obsess it. The sky is a background for the ceaseless circlings of the carrion hawk and kestrel, and the wheelings of those numberless flocks of gulls that would seem altogether to have deserted the ocean for the land. Still life is evident in the ostrich, whose form breaks the level sweep of the land, as, in a strangely pensive attitude, he watches the traveller from afar, while here and there the pink and white of the spoonbill and the rarer scarlet of the flamingo strike patches of brilliant colour from out of the midst of a reed-covered spot. For sound there is the defiant scream of the gorgeous-breasted Camp-plover that gyrates in its hundreds in the path of the traveller. There is a careless irresponsibility about these feathered creatures that is pleasant enough to watch. The very ostrich is doubtless sufficiently joyful after his own fashion. There is one bird, nevertheless, whose habits differ widely from those of all the rest. The little burrowing owl is a force to be reckoned with upon a journey through the Camp.

At the first glimpse it would seem unreasonable that so small a bird should possess so powerful

a personality. For the body of this owl is little larger than that of a thrush, notwithstanding all the disproportionately great and solemn head that surmounts it. A sleek, well-groomed little creature, it wears an aspect in which the ridiculous and the mystic are strangely blended. Driving through the camp, one may frequently meet with one of the species seated upon almost every second or third fencing post that lines the road. As the coach comes abreast of one, he will flap a few yards away in a leisurely and measured flight. Another will remain at his post, and his calm, meditative scrutiny will be turned upon the intruder at close range. Whatever his actions may be, it is quite certain that no one has ever obtained a near view of the back of his head. If he chooses flight, his eyes are upon the stranger at the very instant of his alighting. Should he prefer to stand his ground, one may walk completely round him, and though his body has remained stationary, his head and eyes have swung round as though on a corresponding pivot, and his stare has remained unrelaxed throughout. So imperceptible is the movement that the owl has become the subject of a well-worn "Camp yarn." This is to the effect that in order to encompass the creature's end, it is necessary to do no more than gallop one's horse in rapid circles about it. In the end the bird automatically wrings its own head off!

One could imagine this denizen of the plains undergoing even this process with all the impassive dignity he affects. Nothing surprises the owl. His eyes are filled with the critical abstraction

that denotes the spectator pure and simple. And he and his forbears have seen so much. They have watched the old-time Gaucho in love and in wrath, in the days when courtships were swift, and the hand that drew the slashing "machete" yet swifter; and at the end of those frequent passionate dramas the eyes of so many of them have gazed with their eternal, sphinx-like stare upon others that were growing dim. They have witnessed the stampedes of the armies of wild horses and cattle ere the wire fence lines came to stretch themselves across the land, and they can go further back yet to those Indian days when the country knew neither horse nor ox. Now they see the pump shafts and huge cattle sheds that have risen upon its surface. But they regard even a steam threshing machine, when it goes rumbling past, with the same thoughtful scrutiny as the rest. Indeed, under all circumstances the attitude of the owl remains unchanged. He will sit near by with feathers unperturbed when the "Mad Inglez" comes galloping up to the water tank, and, for want of a better means for a swim, will dive beneath the surface, notwithstanding the thick layer of drowning beetles above.

He has a grievance, it is true, which may possibly have soured his temperament into a condition of dull brooding. He has lost not only a ready-made home, but the only intimate friend that his race ever knew as well. He was wont to share the dwelling holes of the little prairie dog, the vizcacha. But the partnership has been tragically dissolved, for the vizcacha is now all

but extinct. The owl has to burrow out his own home now, and this curse of his labour and solitude lies at the hand of man.

At the end of a long day's drive through the Camp one must occasionally confess to a surfeit of these solemn stares that have held the eye at intervals all the while. Not until the sun has set beneath the dead straight line of the horizon and the stars have broken out overhead do they cease. The scene is mysterious enough then. The white circle of tall grasses that the lamplight reveals on either hand is all that is definite in the neighbourhood. Ahead, is a dimly seen, pale object that bobs rapidly up and down, swerving sharply to right or left from time to time. But, whatever its movements, the horses' hoofs as they swish through the grass follow exactly in its track. For the pale object is the white coat of the outrider, invisible but for this, who pricks ahead to lead the way. Beyond this is the all-pervading blackness that the myriad flashes of the fire-flies themselves serve only to accentuate. Life in the neighbourhood is revealed only by its noises. The plover is there, for its affrighted scream rings out with annoying persistence. And one may gather that the owl is staring too, although, taciturn bird that he is, his hoot comes dolefully through the darkness only now and then.

Water traffic, although scarcely yet in its infancy in the far Southern rivers, has been very fully developed on the La Plata River, and the great streams of the Parana and Uruguay which go to form it. From Monte Video upwards for as far as

THE ERECTION OF THE STATUE OF CHRIST ON THE SUMMIT OF THE ANDES.

ACROSS THE ANDES.—THE NATURAL BRIDGE, PUENTE DEL INCA.

the waters will bear them, one may meet with an almost innumerable flotilla of passenger steamers, tugs, and launches, each of which bears upon its black funnel a large, white letter M. They form the fleet of Nicolas Mihanovich, the undisputed king of the river traffic. The strength of this fleet is certainly imposing. In the Darsena Sud at the Buenos Aires Docks there are tugs by the dozen with this insignia, flitting busily to and fro, while the steamers lie bow to stern in a long row beside the wharf.

The large passenger boats are very favourable specimens of their class. Modelled on the graceful lines of a yacht, the alley-ways, cabins, and saloons are spacious and extremely well decorated. The upper deck of all these vessels runs, unbroken, the entire length from stem to stern, the result affording an amount of roominess and a view of the surroundings that is most pleasant.

These vessels, several of which are fitted for the accommodation of a couple of hundred saloon passengers, ply up and down the rivers. So far as the Uruguay is concerned, they touch at either bank, serving both Argentine and Uruguayan ports. Indeed, so far-reaching has grown this organisation of Nicholas Mihanovich that any puffing craft at all upon the upper stretches of these rivers that does not bear the significant M upon its funnel may be looked upon as a rare exception.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ARGENTINE RAILWAYS.

Argentine Railways—Some monumental enterprises—British Companies—Transandine operations—The Buenos Aires and Pacific—The Great Southern—Some travelling customs—Goods traffic—Termini in Buenos Aires—External communication—Shipping Companies—The Royal Mail—Growth of the line.

It is difficult to speak too highly of the manner in which Argentine Railways in general are conducted. The service throughout the country is liberal and efficient, and, indeed, all that appertains to it is more fully up to date than is the case in the majority of older lands. From the passenger's point of view, at all events, there remains little to be desired. It must be said, moreover, that Argentina, a country of long distance travelling, is worthy to the full of the enterprise which has been expended upon it.

The Railway Companies of the Republic, with the exception of an inconsiderable line or two, are British, and when one has travelled by them and has watched that which they effect it is impossible to repress a feeling of pride in the achievements of one's countrymen. There is order and efficiency here, not only in the highest branches of management, but also in the ranks of the humble officials. Indeed, these latter, whatever they may be during their periodical throes of strike mania, are as courteous as could possibly be desired when on duty. By some means or other the manners of the English railway

official—which, after all, are the best of the kind in the world—would seem to have been instilled into these, simultaneously with their adoption of the very British-looking uniform which clothes them.

The chief Companies whose lines serve Argentina are the Buenos Aires and Pacific, the Great Southern, the Central Argentine, the Buenos Aires and Rosario, the Cordoba Central, the Buenos Aires Western, the Argentine Great Western, and the Transandine. Beyond these there are several other lines, and some Government systems such as the North West Argentine and others. The two first mentioned, as the most important of all, are worthy of special notice.

The Buenos Aires and Pacific in conjunction with the Argentine Great Western and the Transandine together with the Chilian State Railway upon the western side of the Andes provides a service from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The route taken is via Villa Mercedes, San Luis, and Mendoza in Argentine Territory. Upon the Pacific slope the Chilian Transandine conveys the traveller as far as Los Andes, where the Chilian State Railway takes up the burden of the route. The junction of Llaillai is the most important intermediate point upon this system as it is there that the lines branch off, in one direction to Valparaiso, in the other to Santiago. The entire journey from Buenos Aires to Valparaiso is fully described in a later chapter.

This lengthy double-thread of steel passes almost in a straight line across the continent. At that point, however, where the actual passage of the main Andes chain is achieved there is a gap in it that coaches and

mules serve to fill. But the gap will not remain for long. There are men working, ant-like, in the midst of those stupendous heights, scores of miners from the Simplon amongst them who, having fought their way through one of the earth's greatest obstacles, are now involved in a fierce struggle with another.

One may hear the noise of many an explosion among the peaks there, too. For the road that is now in the making will not consist altogether of tunnel. There are stretches where the line, clinging to the sheer sides of the mountains, will be fenced about with snow-sheds—snow-sheds of a kind that will bear with ease the pressure of the deep winter's snow upon their roofs, and that will stand unharmed when a possible avalanche thunders over them to vent its foiled rage upon the valley beneath.

In order to comprehend the titanic nature of this task which the English Companies have taken in hand it must be understood that these mighty Andes are being tamed and bridled with steel at a height of over 10,000 feet above the level of the sea! The difficulties and discouragements have, as may be expected, proved enormous, but the work has been persevered with. And now in two or three years' time the tunnels will have been bored, the snow-sheds constructed, and the traveller, even in midwinter, will sit undisturbed in his carriage as it threads its way through the gorges and peaks of the main pass itself.

In addition to that very rich portion of the country due west of Buenos Aires which it taps, the Buenos Aires and Pacific have turned their attention to the Port of Bahia Blanca which is at present undergoing

such a rapid rise in importance. Here they have constructed imposing wharves and docks, and are, moreover, bringing the port into effectual communication with the large district lying to the north west of it, which until now has suffered from the poor service of transport with which its produce had perforce to be content. There can be little doubt that the future of the Company here bids fair to be a brilliant one.

The Great Southern Railway serves the entire Eastern half of the Buenos Aires province, and possesses, moreover, a most important line which extends westwards from Bahia Blanca to Neuquen. The Company has thus at its disposal an enormous extent of probably the richest wheat area in the world. The traditions of the Railway are of the highest, and the manner in which the enterprise is conducted is well worthy of these. The cars provided for the passenger service here, as in the case of the Buenos Aires and Pacific, are nothing less than superb, and the civility of the officials throughout leaves nothing to be desired. Indeed, the Britisher who proceeds to Argentina in the expectation of having to suffer inconvenience in his railroad travellings will meet with an agreeable surprise. Once in an Argentine Pullman Car, he will discover to his astonishment that he has been " roughing " it at home. Whatever he may require, from a bath to some light refreshment between the regular meals, he has but to press a button, and the attendant will do the rest. The sleeping cars, moreover, are not only lavishly decorated, but extremely comfortably as well.

It is usual, when on the eve of a journey of any length in the Republic, for the traveller to book his sleeping berth beforehand. The number of his berth and of the coach in which it is situated is plainly marked upon the ticket. The proceeding obviates all excuse for confusion or flurry. One has merely to stroll towards the spot reserved, and to place oneself in the hands of the attendant attached to the coach. For the benefit of new-comers to the country it may be said that a light dust coat is almost indispensable in the course of a journey during the dry summer months. The clouds of dust raised then by the passage of the train are somewhat overpowering and all-penetrating.

The goods traffic of Argentine Railways naturally affords an item of supreme importance. The wagons employed for the purpose are of great size, the largest being able to accommodate no less than forty tons of wheat. As an instance of the magnitude of this traffic, it may be said that the Buenos Aires and Pacific Railway from June, 1905, to June, 1906, dealt with 710,478 tons of cereals. The total for the previous year, by the way, was 649,507 tons. The demand for engines and rolling stock for this purpose has been almost frenzied of late, and the increase of produce has restrained resources to the utmost. Indeed, during the harvest of 1904-5 the Great Southern Railway was a little unfortunate in this respect. To such an unexpected extent had the crops swelled that the Company was unable entirely to cope with the situation.

In order to appreciate the manner of progress of

one of these vast goods trains the simplest method is to mount within the rear truck of the long, grey line. Ere doing this, however, there is an uncomfortable formality to be undergone. It is necessary to sign a document absolving the Company from all responsibility in case of an accident. Many of these trains are four or five hundred yards in length, and when one of these is in the full swing of its progress there are moments when one may regret having given any undertaking of the kind. The heavy rolling of the long car, and the occasional shock and loud banging as the buffers clash together with those of the next cause the traveller to cling for dear life to any object that affords handhold. But a progress of the kind is worth making for all that. For all the lurches and bumps, it is something to know that one is travelling at thirty miles an hour or so, clinging to the tail of this travelling wealth of produce. And, so far as accidents are concerned, statistics afford a comfortable assurance as to their rarity.

In the Argentine Railway world Buenos Aires stands for Rome. All roads lead to the capital. Of the termini the Great Southern Station at Plaza Constitucion, a magnificent and roomy building, is the most imposing. This Company possesses, in addition, a terminus at Casa Amarilla. The Buenos Aires and Pacific, and the Central Argentine share a large station at Retiro. Within a few hundred yards of this is the terminus of the Buenos Aires and Rosario. This station, by the way, was constructed in a remarkably short space of time by Mr. A. Soley. Building operations were

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] sixty days of the period of [illegible] remained. Nevertheless, by dint of the [illegible] brought to bear, the entire structure was [illegible] eighty-three days. The remaining [illegible] is the Metropolis is that of the Buenos Ayres Western, situated at Plaza Once. None of these stations, it may be remarked, are much within a [illegible] of miles of the centre of the city.

The [illegible] for travel between Argentina and other lands have naturally shown an increase proportionate to the development of the Republic. The British, Italian, German and French flags are all represented to an important degree in this traffic. The arrivals and departures of the mails have, in consequence, attained to a frequency which is of considerable benefit to all concerned. There is now, moreover, scarcely a port of the first rank in Europe which does not possess its direct means of communication with Argentina.

The Italian boats are wont to carry the largest number of immigrants, for the reason that the great majority of this class are natives of the Southern Peninsula. The art of compression would seem well understood here, and, as upon the arrival at Buenos Aires of one of these craft one watches the disgorging of its living freight, the proverbial sardine is brought strongly to mind. They are, however, handsome boats for the most part. The most important Italian Steamship Company is that of "la Veloce," whose steamers ply between Genoa and Buenos Aires. Germany is represented by the

ANDINE TRAVELLING—THE COACH ROAD.

ACROSS THE ANDES—LAS CUEVAS—CHANGING FROM TRAIN TO MULES.

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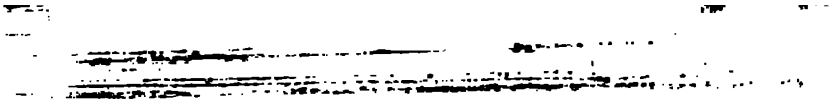

Hamburg South American line, and France by the Messageries Maritimes.

The number of British lines that serve Argentina is considerable. The more important Companies comprise the Royal Mail, the Pacific, Lamport and Holt, the Houlder Line, and the Nelson, Prince and Houston lines. Beyond this, the Shaw, Savill Line, and the New Zealand Shipping Company call at Montevideo on their homeward bound trips from the Antipodes.

The best known of all the English lines, however, and the one which is most generally associated with the South American traffic is the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company. The history of this Company is altogether bound up with that of Argentina. Founded as it was in 1838, when the Republic was in the first throes of its troubled and irresponsible youth, operations were commenced with a modest fleet of fourteen vesels which, abreast of the times though they were, compare insignificantly with the most modest of the Company's modern cargo boats.

Since that time the growth of the line has steadily kept pace with that of the Argentine Republic. In order to demonstrate the rapidity of its recent development it is necessary to refer to the statistics of the fleet. In 1901, for instance, the tonnage of this amounted to 85,144 tons. In 1906 it had leaped up to a total of 165,511 tons, with a couple of large steamers building. In this year, moreover, an arrangement was arrived at by which the Pacific Steam Navigation Company's interest in the Australian mail service was taken over by the Royal Mail.

By this means the latter obtained the services of the steamers Ortona, Oroya, Orotava, and Oruba. Thus before the end of 1906 the total tonnage amounted, in rough numbers, to over 170,000 tons.

Indeed, in connection with a country in which British enterprise, compared with that of some other nations, is somewhat at a discount, it is pleasant to be able to remark upon a concern which is more than holding its own. The "Aragon," the "Amazon," and the "Araguaya," three representatives of the "last word" in the Company's liners, are magnificent vessels of 10,000 tons each (in 1901 the largest vessel in the service was of 5946 tons). These "Packets," as the company, following tradition, insists on terming its boats, are superbly fitted up. The Argentine millionaire—and the genuine specimens of this amiable class are surprisingly numerous—has a weakness for travelling *en prince*. It is principally to cater for his tastes in the matter that the *cabines de luxe* have been instituted—self-contained suites of rooms upholstered in quite a regal fashion. The fortunate possessor of one of these—and of a long purse—may make the journey in stately independence of the rest of the vessel, if he will. From which it may be gathered that the motto of the Royal Mail is undoubtedly "enterprise."

The worries of those directly concerned in the carriage of passengers to South America must be more acute than upon other routes. English, Argentines, and Brazilians form the predominating elements of these extremely cosmopolitan gatherings. Although the tastes of the two former have assimi-

lated themselves to a considerable extent, nevertheless the demands, physical and social, of all three are varied. It must be admitted that the Royal Mail cope very successfully with the diversity of demand. Indeed, during the course of those deck competitions which form such a feature of the voyage it is astonishing to watch the fusion of these nationalities, and the development of sporting proclivities in even those of the Brazilian passengers who were generally credited with little desire for such pastime.

CHAPTER XXV.

NATURAL HISTORY—SOME PESTS OF THE CAMP.

The Locust—Its rapacity, habits, and haunts—Methods of destroying the insect—The increase of the hare—The introduction of the rabbit—Danger of the proceeding.

The Argentine locust is blessed, or rather cursed, with proclivities similar to those of his brethren in other quarters of the globe. As elsewhere, its voracity is only equalled by the hatred with which mankind regards the insect. Until the summer of 1905-6, the scourge had indulged in a laudable absence for the space of five years or so. But, just as it was beginning to be hoped that the insect had become oblivious of the rich maize fields and harvests of the South, it appeared once more to levy toll upon the produce of certain districts.

A visitation of the scourge is wont to be announced by numbers of flying locusts, who come as skirmishers in the forefront. These, followed by increasing hordes, fly fairly rapidly over the land. Their behaviour is surprisingly modest in the first instance, and the damage for which they are responsible comparatively insignificant. As a matter of fact, they have flown southwards in order to breed, and their appetites are somewhat neglected to this end. Nevertheless, they are capable enough of stripping a maize field or two, *en passant*. The serious business of the hour, however, is that of egg-laying. As a

FRONTIER POST ON THE SUMMIT OF THE ANDES.

IN THE HEART OF THE CORDILLERAS—THE MULE TRACK.

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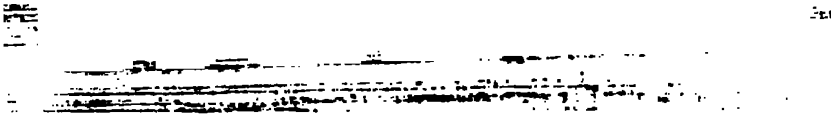

preparation for this, they are wont to contrive a small hole, in road soil, or any other ground, bare, for preference. Into this they deposit their eggs—possibly with all the pleasure that a mistaken sense of duty involves. It is with the advent of the young locusts that matters begin to wear a serious aspect so far as the landowner is concerned. In its first stage the creature closely resembles a grasshopper, though its colouring is far more brilliant. Indeed, with its yellow, green and black body, and with its red legs, the youngster's colouring outshines that of his later life. But it is these gaudy-hued juveniles, or rather their appetites, that afford as great a scourge as any. They will pass slowly along, jumping in grasshopper fashion, and clinging in clusters to leaves and stems, until each plant is bare. Thus they proceed, a devouring army, whose springs grow longer and whose bodies wax fatter, until the sprouting of wings proclaims them full-grown locusts. But, as a sobering compensation for its shimmering appendages, the colouring of the body has become duller and more uniformly red.

It is at this stage that the most imposing flights of the creatures are to be witnessed. Seen from a distance, a swarm will resemble a vast smoke-cloud, ascending from a burning city. The force of their numbers is extraordinary. They will occasionally settle upon boughs of large trees, layer upon layer, in quantities sufficient to cause the limbs to bend and crack beneath their weight. One may see the fronts of railway engines, carriages, and trucks that have passed through one of these swarms, thickly coated

with fragments of the insects' bodies. But, in an army of locusts, casualties go for nothing. Indeed, one might as well endeavour to stay a cloud in the sky, as to interfere with a flight of the insects. Even the wingless youngsters, the "Saltonas," would seem possessed of an unswerving determination. They will even go the length of forcing their way across rivers. Plunging their little bodies recklessly in the water, they will battle across, emerging on the other side a mile or so, perhaps, downstream, with possibly a trifling loss of a few thousands or millions of their number—in any case, a drop in the ocean.

The extent of the damage of which they are capable of inflicting may be judged from the aspect of a maize field before and after their visitation. Previous to it, the maize stands out in all its heavy luxuriance, a verdant mass of leaves and of heavy, close-set heads. Once ruthlessly ravaged, the transformation is as marvellous as it is tragic. Every shred of the rich verdure has utterly gone—swallowed by a myriad of tiny, voracious throats. In its place is a sorry, straggling collection of thin, bare stalks, reed-like, shivering and desolate. At such periods the very houses will be invaded, more especially by the "Saltonas." Indeed, the unpleasant creatures are altogether ubiquitous. Overhead, the air is filled with the noise of the "fliers'" wings, while the "Saltonas," a dozen or so roused at every step, evoke a crisp, crackling sound from the dried grass as they leap. The only vegetable growth that is generally held to be safe from the ravages of the insects is that of the Paraiso tree. It is true that they prefer any

other food to the leaves and bark of this, and it is only in extremely rare cases that they touch it. Nevertheless, when sorely pressed, they have been known to spare the Paraiso no more than anything else.

It is a little difficult to gather what good purpose the locust fulfils—if one excepts the service of chastening which it renders. But this is no argument to put to an Estanciero whose crops have been eaten. There are a few animals which feed upon them, it is true. But even here the insects obtain their revenge. Ostriches and poultry will enjoy a hearty meal upon the creatures—with the result that their eggs are ruined for edible purposes, for the time being. Their interiors become dark, and stained, much as though claret had been spilled within them. They are of a fishy flavour, moreover, and altogether uneatable. Thus, the malice of the locust holds fast, even after death. They are themselves, however, liable to a disease. A parasite is wont to breed within them, a worm which ends by eating their bodies hollow. As may be expected, the sufferings of the insects meet with scant sympathy. When in such a condition, they are easily captured, and, when opened, the greater or lesser extent of the parasite's ravages may be determined. The workings of this latter are being closely watched, with a view to an active and offensive alliance between it and mankind. There can be no doubt that, could the parasite be introduced within the winter retreats of the locust, the consequences would be direful for the pests.

To attack the locusts in their own haunts, however, is no easy matter. These are known to lie in the far northern province of the Chaco. But accurate knowledge of the situation of these winter fastnesses is wanting. For the insect is fortunate in having chosen the wild, unexplored portion of the province. The district which they are known to favour—or, at all events, the road which leads there—is barren of water to an extent which renders its passage extremely hazardous. It is, moreover, practically the sole remaining spot in the Republic where hostile Indians are to be met with. These latter, together with the want of water, have, so far, rendered access to the place impossible, though the lives of many white men have been sacrificed in the attempt. From the landowner's point of view, the extreme distance at which the retreat lies is doubly unfortunate. Were it less remote a stricken insect might reach it, to spread death and devastation amongst his fellows. As it is, the dying creature falls to earth upon the way, and the contamination of his presence becomes a wasted weapon.

A war of extermination is waged upon the locusts further South, nevertheless. There is a rumour in Argentina that Marconi himself is about to join in the fray, and is coming to the rescue with an apparatus which shall shatter the hordes in mid-air. But, whether the report has any foundation in fact, I am unable to say. The method at present in vogue is that of digging pitfalls for the creatures. Long pits, three to four feet in depth, are dug. The edges of these are protected by overlapping sheets of

COACH ROAD ON CHILIAN SLOPE.

corrugated iron, over which, when once within, the insect cannot crawl. The locusts are then driven towards this until their bodies lie in thick layers within the hollow, when they are covered up by a solid coating of earth. The thoroughness with which this operation is conducted varies considerably, as may be expected. In some cases, it is performed in the most perfunctory manner; in others a broad and efficient drive is engineered, with "wings" of corrugated iron that stretch far on either side.

It is not a very easy matter to obtain the labour requisite for these organised slaughterings. The crushed locusts exhale a most nauseating odour, and those in search of work will give the preference to almost any task but this. The method of dealing with the pests is undoubtedly an efficient one—so far as it goes. There are many, however, who look upon it despondently, alleging that the deaths effected by this means are altogether insignificant when compared with the vast numbers which invade the country.

The Government is keenly interested in this warfare, and is ready to lend practical assistance in any quarter where it may be required. Inspectors have been appointed to this end. The majority of these are extremely efficient and painstaking. Others, naturally enough, are less so. There is a tale told of one of these officials, who, having arrived at an estancia, commenced a learned discourse upon the supposed locusts that he saw hovering in the air about him. But, unfortunately for his reputation,

the latter turned out to be nothing more nor less than the ordinary dragon-fly of Argentina. There are instances, too, where the sterner sense of duty has been softened by those considerations of courtesy which are so dear to the Argentine. Concerning this, an English Estanciero relates an experience which tells against himself. Having complied with none of the regulations laid down for the extinction of the pest, he was disagreeably surprised one day by the arrival upon the scene of a locust inspector. The Estanciero breakfasted his visitor sumptuously, bringing his best efforts at goodfellowship into play. In the meanwhile, he indulged in a totally imaginary catalogue of his locust-killing feats. Men were on the verge of working here, trenching there—one might have imagined from the conversation that the sole aim and object of the Estanciero's existence was the slaughter of the insects. The inspector heard the enthusiastic views of the other with patience and interest. But he had seen for himself. At the end of the conversation he leaned forward with a smile. "All this is excellent, amigo, perfectly excellent," he assured the other. "But let me advise you. Do *something*. If you will dig a little hole in the ground, just to make a show, I, for my part, shall rest satisfied."

This slackness in battling with the locust has, however, its more serious side. The object of those who work hard towards the extermination of the insect is necessarily defeated should a neighbour permit them to flourish more or less unchecked. Cohesion in the matter is indispensible, and unless every single

Estanciero bears the brunt, the struggle is likely to be prolonged far more than would otherwise be the case.

One hears much of a secondary insect, termed the native locust, whose depredations are much feared. The insect, however, is merely a moderate sized grasshopper, and its habits are no more voracious than those of the rest of its kind. In numbers, however, it is formidable. In those places where these grasshoppers most abound, one may ride or drive for miles through the Camp, disturbing quantities at every yard. The sight of them as they rise in front of the horses' hoofs, puts one in mind of light grey snow, leaping upwards instead of descending. And —to continue the elemental metaphor—the noise caused by their alighting upon the grass strongly resembles a hailstorm. From all of which the force of their countless numbers is evident.

With the exception of the locust, the Camp is comparatively free from creatures that levy an illicit toll upon its produce. Nevertheless, the old story of reckless animal importation from which our own Colonies have suffered so severely finds an echo here —an insignificant one so far, it is true. The hare, for instance, has been introduced within the Republic, and in some districts has increased to an alarming degree. As an example of the extent of this spread of the breed, an estancia in Cordoba, two leagues in size, may be mentioned, upon which it is estimated that there are no less than twenty thousand hares. The damage caused by this multitude of animals is, of course, considerable. The hare, never-

theless, is scarcely likely to get the better of affairs to any serious extent. Its presence, moreover, brings compensations with it that are by no means negligible. When shot, a ready sale is at hand for the carcase. The prices which they command, moreover, afford an agreeable fillip to a day's sport.

The introduction of the rabbit is a far more serious matter. It is not too much to say that the possibilities of incalculable disaster are latent here. In the face of the appalling experiences which Australia and New Zealand have undergone it would seem hardly credible that an experiment of the kind should have been attempted. Yet there are Estancieros, Englishmen amongst them, who have put down a number of the vermin, and are doing their utmost to assist in the establishment of warrens. The reasons given for their encouragement are that the creatures add to the variety of the "bag" in a day's shooting, and that their presence is pleasantly reminiscent of home—precisely the motives which induced the sentimental Scotsman to bring over to New Zealand the forerunner of its now costly army of thistles. In Argentina the introducers of the rabbit, if remonstrated with upon the subject, will retort that the animal does not breed freely in the black earth of the country. And there the matter is wont to end. It is, of course, perfectly true that the dark, rich soil is one which does not suit the rabbit in the ordinary course of events. Those who continue to introduce them are sitting over a gunpowder mine, lighted match in hand, nevertheless. As one who has witnessed the depredations of the rabbit in the Anti-

podes, it is impossible to speak too strongly upon the subject. To say nothing of what would happen did some of the creatures chance to light upon an area of soil which favoured them, there is the possibility of their becoming acclimatised to the point of thriving in an earth unsuitable to their original nature. There are sufficient instances of such alterations of habit amongst transported animals. Were this to come about; in fact, should the rabbit once commence to make headway from any cause whatever, Argentina might well pray for a visitation of the locusts instead. For the latter, at all events, is but an intermittent nuisance, but the four-legged pest, like the poor, is always at hand.

CHAPTER XXVI.

NATURAL HISTORY.

The jaguar and puma—Large rodents—The carpincho and nutria—Habits of the skunk—The opossum—The iguana—Ostriches and their peculiarities—Their commercial value—Shooting in Argentina—A land of partridge and duck—The failure of the pheasant—Vultures, large and small.

The march of civilisation has dealt hardly with the more important species of Argentine wild animals. Of the fiercer order of these the sole representatives are the jaguar and puma. These, however, have been so frequently described that it is unnecessary to say more than that both are on the point of extinction. Though still to be met with in quite remote districts such as the Chaco, the only traces which remain of them in the majority of provinces are those places which bear their name, and where, one learns, they once abounded.

The guanaco, a species of wild llama, though termed by some a deer, still exists in the more mountainous and solitary districts of the Andes and of the South. The animal, however, has become very rare. Taught, perhaps, by a somewhat bitter experience, it has become extremely shy in its habits, and is most difficult to approach.

The deer may yet be met with in considerable herds. It is now preserved to some extent, and a number may be seen when driving through the paddocks of estancias in certain districts. But

these, for all their propinquity to human beings, are extremely wary. They are occasionally ridden down by a party on horseback, without the aid of hounds, a sport that is at least as exciting as our own method of stag-hunting.

The carpincho is an animal peculiar to South America. Although termed a water-hog, it is in reality a rodent—the largest specimen, in fact, of the order that exists. Of the size of a large dog, smooth of skin, and minus a tail, it is remarkable rather for its quaint appearance than its beauty. When in the waters of the lagoons, which are its favourite haunts, it swims in the accepted manner of a rat, with the tip of its nose just showing above the water. These creatures, notwithstanding their rather hideous appearance, are perfectly harmless, and, being of an impracticably trustful nature, form an easy prey for one who cares to take the trouble to shoot them.

The second largest known rodent is the nutria, of which South America has also the monopoly. It is precisely similar to an enormous rat, with the curious exception that its hind feet are webbed. It is possible to tame these creatures, although it must be admitted that the idea of a rat a couple of feet or so in length—to say nothing of its tail, which is long in proportion—would not be acceptable to all. The animal, when tamed, appreciates friendly handling to the utmost. Its method of demonstrating satisfaction is, however, likely to be misunderstood by one ignorant of its habits. It will respond to caresses by a curious, plaintive cry, quite startlingly akin to the peevish wail of a troubled

infant. If annoyed, however, it will give vent to its anger by means of barks.

The vizcacha, or prairie dog, is now rarely met with. Formerly the Camp was wont to be honeycombed by his burrowings, but one may now ride for many a long day, and yet catch no glimpse of the little animal.

The skunk, however, is common enough, unfortunately. He is a creature to be avoided. As a matter of fact, it is only with the greatest reluctance that man or dog will consent to tackle this nauseating animal at close quarters. As a means of defence his weapon is an efficient one, for the odour he is capable of emitting is altogether overpowering. To search for an example of the appalling persistence of this dreaded peculiarity of his, one need not necessarily tread the Camp itself at all. Provided that one be travelling in one of the front carriages of a train which has run over one of the species, the experience will be sufficient. For the characteristic odour that ensues will permeate the carriages themselves for the space of a quarter of an hour or more. An accident of this kind is by no means infrequent, and when it occurs it may be counted upon to announce itself to the passengers with unmistakable force.

The Argentine oppossum is of a grey hue, and the owner of a black tail. His fur, however, though similar in colour, is a little less thick and soft than that of the Australian specimen. The creature is rather addicted to minor depredations such as the devouring of hen's eggs and the like. For this

THE MULE TRACK—THE ANDES.

PATAGONIA—DESCENT FROM THE SUMMIT OF CORDILLERAS TO THE CHACABUCO VALLEY.

MULE TRACK IN THE ANDES—COMMENCEMENT OF DESCENT INTO CHILE.

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reason he is wont to be destroyed whenever met with.

Another robber of eggs is the iguana. But this is certainly the only feature in which the latter bears any resemblance whatever to the opossum. And even this crime he consummates in an entirely different fashion from that of the other, for he is given to employ his tail as a hammer wherewith to smash the eggs ere he feeds upon them. The large lizard is armed with sharp teeth and claws, nevertheless. One may frequently meet with this quaint creature in the open Camp, and if one would test his pace, the simplest method is to gallop straight in his direction. Then he will depart, in all haste, with his long reptilian tail streaming out in the fashion of an inverted banner straight behind him. When a Gaucho kills an iguana, he will open its stomach in order that he may extract a small ball of grease that is to be found within it. This, he emphatically avers, when used as an embrocation, is invaluable as a remedy for rheumatism.

The armadillo, with its long snout and amoured back, is still common enough throughout the country. The modern creature, when compared with the giant fossil forms of the species which are extant, has evidently degenerated sadly in size.

So far as Argentine bird-life is concerned, the land is abundantly stocked with feathered creatures of all descriptions. The most important that is to be met with in the camp, from both the commercial and and picturesque point of view, is the ostrich. These are to be seen in large numbers where the country

has not been broken into for the sake of agriculture, and the long-necked birds frequently afford a very pretty addition to the landscape. The South American ostrich is somewhat smaller than his South African brother; his plumage, moreover, is both of a lighter and greyer hue. So far as the value of the feathers is concerned, those of the former are not to be compared with the far costlier adornments of the latter. They are extremely abundant, however, and are used for the more humble and domestic purposes, such as dusting-brushes and the like. The dealings between the owner of an estancia upon which the birds exist and the purchaser of the feathers are based upon the profit-sharing system. The latter, for instance, will undertake the necessary labour involved, and will agree to pay a certain sum for each bird that is found and plucked. This operation is effected in the autumn, just prior to the setting in of the colder weather, and it is undoubtedly rough on the ostrich. Indeed, the death-roll, for which the effects of this treatment are responsible, is considerable. The sums gained by the Estancieros from the transaction are, moreover, insignificant enough. Many of these, therefore, chiefly through motives of humanity, have ceased to permit this stripping of the birds, retaining them merely for the sake of ornamentation.

The ostriches upon such estancias have become peculiarly tame. They will occasionally advance with their quaint, prancing stride to within a few feet of the bystander. Then, with their heads perched sideways upon their long stems, they will indulge in

a persistent stare. For curiosity in an ostrich is as largely developed as its eggs—and this is saying a good deal. The latter commodities, however, have, at all events, their practical uses. An omelette made from an ostrich's egg may sound a little grotesque, but the dish is no uncommon one in the Camp.

The cry of these birds is extremely shrill and piercing. It is said, for instance, that the calls of the creatures upon the further bank of the river Uruguay have been distinctly heard at Gualeguay-chu, in the province of Entre Rios, at which point the river is four miles or so in breadth. In this instance, however, there is no doubt that the water was of considerable aid in the carriage of the sound.

South African ostriches have now been introduced for commercial purposes into the Republic, and there is little reason to doubt that these will eventually flourish amid their new surroundings.

So far as game is concerned, it would be a poor shot, indeed, that went out into the Camp with his gun and returned empty-handed. There are several varieties of partridge, the majority being of a lighter hue and rather more speckled than the British species. The martineta, a very similar bird, is, if not of this breed, at all events closely allied to it. In the Western Provinces, too, a plumed bird of the partridge order is to be found.

Here is an extract from the game book of the Indepencia Estancia in Santa Fé. The bag recorded is of a day when twelve guns were out :—

152½ brace of mixed game birds, chiefly partridges, Martineta, and the like.

540 hares.

The second item, strictly speaking, has no concern with the matter of this chapter. It is included, however, as an instructive instance of what a day's sport may bring forth here. It must be explained, moreover, that this bag was by no means phenomenal, and not even a very unusual one.

There have been many endeavours to introduce the pheasant into the country. These attempts, however, have not yet met with any real success. When hand-fed, and in receipt of unremitting personal attention, they fare moderately well, and are wont to breed. But, if left to their own devices, they fail to thrive, and usually die out after a short while.

Duck and teal are to be found in great quantities in the neighbourhood of the ponds and water deposits. Of the many varieties of these, perhaps the most striking is one with a chocolate-red breast, and a splash of vivid blue upon the wing. There is another of a very light speckled brown, shot with a plain band of white across the wing. But to describe each of the different-hued ducks that abound in Argentina would require a chapter in itself.

The Teru-Tero is a bird whose numbers literally swarm in the Camp. It is the Argentine Plover, similar in almost every respect to our own. Its plumage, however, more especially that of the breast, is far more brilliant. The shrill call of the creature is identical with that of the British species, and it possesses the same habit of circling wildly in the air,

VALPARAISO—THE PORT RAILWAY STATION.

PLAZA, VALPARAISO.

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when disturbed. A species of Golden Plover exists, but is far more rarely met with.

The chief of the large army of the vulture tribe that exists in Argentina is, of course, the condor. But this king of the carrion birds is now rare. I have seen him swerving in his graceful circles at a great height in mid-air amidst the inner solitudes of the Andes. But, in order to obtain a nearer view, unlimited time and patience are indispensable. It is possible, however, to tame even these gigantic birds, provided they be captured at a sufficiently early age. A Mr. Petty, one of the resident engineers of the Central Argentine Railway, succeeded admirably in this achievement. Having secured a young condor as a fledgling, it was brought up by hand, and given to understand the equivalent of that polite piece of Spanish phraseology—that it must consider Mr. Petty's establishment as its own. This once instilled within the youngster's brain, it lost surprisingly little time in making itself perfectly at home. It became on terms of hail-fellow-well-met with all the inmates of the house, engaged itself occasionally in amicable rough-and-tumble contests with the dogs, and indulged in the quaint antics of a society clown. But in the end, the full-grown bulk of the condor became tedious—to others, if not to itself. It was shipped off to England, and is probably the inhabitant of some zoological gardens or other at the present moment.

Argentina is remarkably deficient in birds of the eagle tribe—by which is commonly understood those birds of prey that for preference seek and hunt down

a *living* quarry. The majority of the predatory-beaked birds of the country, although they occasionally resort to such tactics, are addicted to feed more readily upon carrion, and thus belong rather to the vulture tribe than to the other. There is, however, one true eagle to be met with—a fine creature with spreading grey wings, and a body that is almost white in colour.

The Carancho is a bird the sight of which is a familiar one throughout the Camp. It represents a cross between a vulture and a hawk. It will peck out the eyes of lambs, for instance, but is also strongly addicted to carrion. The persistence of these creatures is amazing. I have watched a number of them as they followed a hare which was diseased and dying. So feeble was this latter animal's condition that it could do no more than totter a few yards at a stretch. Then, when it sank to the earth, the Caranchos would seat themselves about it, in contemplative expectation of the end. When the hare started off once again, the birds would keep it close company, flapping lazily along. Thus the strange procession, the moribund hare and its grim escort, went slowly across the plain and out of sight. The colouring of the Carancho is dark brown, with a light band across the wings. It stands high upon its legs, and will occasionally throw back its head and utter a curious cry that strangely resembles the chuckling of a human being.

The Chimangu is a smaller carrion-hawk of a brown-grey colour. It is wont to feed upon carcases,

and to prey upon the young of birds that nest upon the ground.

The Cuerbo is a far more rare bird. It is not a rook, despite its name, but a black vulture. Its habits are the ordinary ones of the tribe. A Camp Kestrel with a red-brown body, and bright grey wings is also occasionally to be met with.

CHAPTER XXVII.

NATURAL HISTORY.

The parrot—The flamingo—The bustard—The Chuña, Churrinche, and Pecho Colorado—The scissor-bird—The Viuda—Varieties of humming-bird—Call of the "Bien te Veo"—Peculiarities of the oven-bird — The leñatero — Miniature pigeons and doves—Argentine fish—Frogs—Snakes—The Tarantula—"Bichos"—The dragon-fly—Camp wasps—Butterflies—Ants—The mosquito—Flies—The thistle—Some wild flowers of the camp—Cactus—The chuchu.

The range of Argentina's winged species is great, as is only to be expected when the size of the country is taken into consideration. Parrots are common in the Northern districts. Among the handsomest of these is a brilliant green and blue bird, which is to be met with in large flocks by the roadside. One may frequently discern them, too, as they hover about the tubular entrances of their large nests composed of sticks. Parroquets are to be met with in Misiones, but seldom elsewhere.

There is a fair number of flamingoes upon the open Camp in those spots were the ground tends toward marsh. A handsome pink and white spoonbill is, however, more frequently in evidence than the other. The woodpecker is represented by a species of the tribe found in Salta and Patagonia.

An occupant of the Buenos Aires marshes is a bustard of a grey colour with a black ring about its neck. Its habits would seem to differ somewhat from those attributed to the species in general, inasmuch

CHILIAN LADY IN NATIONAL COSTUME.

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as the bird elsewhere is held to prefer an arid soil for its haunt. This Argentine specimen possesses a long and a short spur upon each wing.

The Chuña is a fine example of the secretary bird order, and is extremely nimble upon its legs. A dark brown Ibis, too, is indigenous to the country.

The Churrinche is a small bird about the size of the English sparrow. Of the flycatcher tribe, it has a brilliant scarlet head and breast, the remainder of its body being black. The Pecho Colorado is another bird of well-marked colouring. The size of a thrush, it rejoices in a bright red breast as a relief to the somewhat sombre colouring that it possesses beyond this.

The scissor-bird owes its name to its long divided tail. It is a handsome bird with a yellow pole to its head. Its flight is erratic in the extreme. Possessed of what might be termed a feathery, twin-screw steering apparatus, it is enabled to twist and turn in the air in a marvellous fashion. As it darts to and fro a marked noise of vibration accompanies its movements. The Viuda (widow) bird is a charming little creature, snow white in colour with a black edging to its wings.

It goes without saying that the most gorgeous of all Argentina's feathered creatures is the humming bird. One of the most brilliant varieties of the tribe is to be met with in Cordoba and Tucuman. The colouring of its body is green shot with gold. It possesses a vivid scarlet tail separated at the end into twin sheaves of feathers. A somewhat similar species is found in the province of Buenos Aires.

But in this case the green is duller, the tail shorter, and the colouring of the head is a golden red.

The most common of the song birds is that named by the Argentines "Bien te veo." It is so termed from the fact that its full call is supposed to represent the words, "Bien te veo, bicho feo:—'I see you well, ugly beast." The call is wont to be repeated over and over again, and is an extremely musical one, notwithstanding the impolite construction placed upon its ending. The colouring of the "Bien te Veo" is a greenish yellow, and it is possessed of a broad, black bill. The bird, which is usually termed the Argentine thrush, is in reality a mocking bird, with a pale breast, and dark wings and body. A brownish yellow bird with a spreading tail is the Perincho. Its chief peculiarity—to be Irish—lies in its egg. This is blue with a complete network of white traced upon it.

SECTION OF AN OVEN-BIRD'S NEST. VIEWED FROM ABOVE.

The Ornero, or oven bird, is a creature that builds a most curious nest. In shape this latter is not unlike a dome. The nest is contrived principally of mud, and the protective ingenuity of the structure is apparent from the diagram of a section. It should be noticed that the doorway which gives admittance to

the entrance passage is invariably upon the right hand side. The site of these nests is usually the top of any convenient post. The Ornero is exceedingly common in many provinces. In Corrientes, where it chiefly abounds, one may meet with a nest of the kind on the top of almost every other telegraph pole. The bird is regarded by the natives with an affection similar to that with which a robin meets in England. The majority of the Gauchos are firmly convinced that the Ornero will on no account consent to build its nest on the Sabbath.

The Leñatero (wood-bearer) is a bird which in appearance much resembles the skylark. It builds a nest of sticks that, considering its own size, is enormous and altogether disproportionate.

A very common sight upon the Camp is that of the small burrowing owl, which, however, is referred to in another chapter. Flocks of seagulls abound in many spots quite remote from the ocean or from any large stretches of water. Throughout Argentina many varieties of pigeons and doves are to be met with in great quantities. Amongst these are miniature specimens, of smaller size than a thrush, which nevertheless have the power of cooing as loudly as their larger brethren.

To conclude with bird life, it may be mentioned that the sparrow has been introduced into the Republic. As might have been expected, it has taken very kindly to the soil, and is becoming something of a nuisance.

The principal fish, representative of Argentine waters, are the Pejerrey, Anchoa, Dorado, and the

Palometa. In the River Uruguay catfish of an enormous size are frequently procured. The method of their capture is the following. A fisherman, carrying in one hand a lantern, and in the other a "machete" (dagger), will wade at night into the shallow waters where these abound. So fascinated are the catfish by the light that they remain motionless in the shallows and are thus despatched with ease by means of the "machete."

Frogs are extremely numerous upon the Camp, and their evensong is occasionally boisterous to the point of discomfort. One of the most handsome of the species is an enormous creature whose dark skin, mottled with grey and purple, possesses a sheen and a depth of softness that strangely resembles the fabric of plush. This animal possesses a formidable looking row of teeth. Throughout the country small lizards are common. None of these, however, possess any unusual peculiarities. So far as snakes are concerned, these are naturally most numerous in the northern provinces. The largest is the huge boa-constrictor, but the most deadly is the Vibora de la cruz.

The tarantula spider is by no means a rare denizen of the Camp. Although the creature's bite is poisonous, one need anticipate no serious results from such a mishap. The appearance of one of these spiders is, however, menacing and repellent in the extreme. They are frequntly to be found within doors, and upon the discovery of one it is well to institute a search for its mate, for they are wont to run in couples. The tarantula exists in a

hole in the ground, and, should one be desirous of capturing a specimen, it is possible to indulge in some land angling of a sporting order. The instrument required is nothing beyond a piece of meat attached to the end of some string. The meat is lowered within the hole, and, provided the inhabitant be at home, it will be a very short while ere a bite is perceptible. Then, as the bait is drawn up towards the surface, the long, feathery legs of the spider come into view, gripping the meat as fiercely as a crab does its prey. When the stout body is drawn clear from the earth its capture is perfectly easy, for so gluttonous is the animal that it thinks of nothing beyond the retention of its meal.

Pets can be made of almost anything, and even the tarantula forms no exception to the rule. At one estancia, at all events, near the borders of the Uruguay river, there lived a tarantula, who, as the family of the Estanciero declared, was capable of everything but speech. Considering that his procedure consisted of waiting about in the vicinity of the verandah, and of failing to run away when approached, the statement savoured somewhat of exaggeration. But he was undoubtedly tame, and, in the manner of pets, would claim his food as a right. Beneath such pampered treatment he waxed a perfectly gigantic spider, a thorough ornament to his species. Indeed, he might have been swelling yet, but for the advent of an officious visitor. The latter, seeing in the tarantula nothing beyond a venomous insect, slew him off-hand when the innocent creature was in all probability merely

begging in spider fashion for his supper. It was only when he exhibited his ponderous victim to his hosts that their dismay revealed to him the true nature of his crime.

"Bichos" form an element to be reckoned with in the course of an Argentine summer. The term, employed in this sense, is a broad one which covers beetles, moths and all insects, winged and crawling. It is a pleasant custom in the Republic to dine in the open air during the months of heat. This affords an hour of revelry for the "Bichos." Attracted by the lamps, they arrive in the neighbourhood of the table in swarms of most inconvenient density. They are of every colour, size, and shape, and are given to fall upon the table cloth, not in dozens, but in hundreds. Perhaps the most objectionable of all is a bulky creature with transparent wings and soft, fat, brown body that is given to blunder against the faces of the guests as well as the lamp shades with maddening persistency. Indeed, this pest would seem even more crassly foolish than the majority of its kind. There is a story told of this "Bicho" in connection with a new-comer to the country which is positively gruesome. The new-comer was somewhat late in entering the room for dinner, and his soup had been awaiting him for a minute or two ere he arrived. It occurred to him after a while to ask why he should be drinking a thick soup, filled with small mock-turtle-like lumps, when it was obvious from the almost emptied plates of the remaining diners that their's was clear. His own and his hostess's sensations may be imagined when it became evident

that the difference lay in "Bichos," pure and simple.

The dragon-fly may be termed the national insect of Argentina. The creature is to be met with everywhere, in the streets and squares of Buenos Aires and of other large cities as well as in the open Camp. In the latter the swarms of the insect are occasionally of astonishing magnitude. They are held to appear in the greatest numbers just prior to rainfall, and, from what I have observed, the theory would appear perfectly correct.

The country owns many varieties of wasps. None of these, however, display any aggressive tendencies towards mankind, or any desire to enter human habitations. This, in view of their size and of their stinging powers, is just as well. Many of their nests, when opened, have been discovered to be filled with insects and larvae of the largest order that have been stung into a comatose condition. There is one species of wasp, however, which is truly beneficial. This builds a perfectly smooth nest from which edible honey may be extracted. The ordinary Camp wasp will run to a length of a couple of inches in body. This latter is either of a steely blue hue with bright chestnut wings, or black with red wings. When flying, the long legs hang down in a bunch beneath, giving a curious appearance to the insect. The burrowing wasps, when busy, are well worth watching. One of these will scoop out the earth from before it, using its legs in precisely the same manner in which a dog scratches at a rabbit hole. Then, without turning its body, it will dart backwards in a perfectly straight line from time to time,

as though for the purpose of surveying its handiwork.

Butterflies are extremely numerous, and in many instances gorgeous, although, of course, not to be compared in splendour with those specimens which the tropical regions of Brazil have to show. The most common upon the Camp is one which strongly resembles our own clouded-yellow (Colias edusa). These are to be met with in all directions. I have frequently seen clusters of from fifty to a hundred settled together on the bare earth in spots, curiously enough, where the ground happened to be moist. An alfalfa field in bloom, however, is their most favourite haunt of all. Here they will hover in almost inconceivable numbers. Indeed, the very air is yellow with them. There are many who assert positively that they have been able to distinguish the sound of the myriad wings. However this may be, the numbers of these butterflies are sufficiently great to damage at times the flowers and seeding of the alfalfa.

There are numerous varieties of Argentine ants, and the bites of some of the species are wont to be remembered by those who have suffered from them. The large circular heaps for which they are responsible upon the Camp are especially noticeable owing to the fact that in the thistle season they are almost invariably covered by the weed, though no other specimens of the plant may be in the neighbourhood. These heaps, occasionally of a diameter of ten yards and more, are treacherous to riders. In order to destroy them a trench is opened under them in

OUTSKIRTS OF VALPARAISO.

BATHING HOUSE NEAR VALPARAISO.

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the rainy season. By this means the water, flowing beneath, causes the loose earth to sink to the level of the rest.

The most gorgeous firefly of the country, the "Tulipan" is described beneath the heading of Uruguay. In addition to this, the ordinary firefly with its intermittent flashes occurs in great numbers.

The mosquito, owing doubtless to the comparative scarcity of timber and of surface water, is not sufficiently numerous in the central and southern provinces to cause much active discomfort. In the Chaco, however, the matter is very different. Here the insect has matters almost entirely his own way. Three distinct species of the pest abound in this province. In addition to the ordinary variety, there is one which is not only plainly visible, but a perfect giant of its kind. The third order, on the other hand, termed "polverines," are sufficiently tiny to be practically invisible. In consequence, the most humble being in the Chaco would sooner dispense with a meal a day than with his mosquito net.

Flies are a source of considerable annoyance during the summer. Indeed, except in the northern Provinces, the precautions taken against these insects are of a more elaborate character than those in use against the mosquitos. It is customary to fit frames of wire gauze into the doorways and window spaces. By this means the air is admitted, minus the flies. In many instances every aperture in the house is protected in this way. At about ten o'clock of a morning it is customary to draw the shutters, the rooms being left in comparative darkness until the

late afternoon. This shutting out of the light serves two purposes. It maintains a low temperature, and does away with the flies' ardent desire to enter. This being so, the leaving of a door open upon an estancia in midsummer is execrated as a social crime against the remaining inmates of the room.

The wild plant most characteristic of the Camp is undoubtedly the thistle. In many districts, more especially where the natural Camp remains, the clumps of these giant plants with their heavy purple heads afford an imposing spectacle. When the bloom is over, too, and the thistle is dying, the huge, round, silken globes of the seed produce quite a charming effect. One variety of these thistles, far from being discouraged by the Estanciero, is actually looked upon as valuable owing to its properties as fodder.

The verbena is a common and very beautiful wild flower in the Camp. One may see broad patches of its blossom here and there amidst the grasses. These are of shades that vary from vivid crimson to pink and white. An anemone of a terra-cotta hue, and a small white waxen lily on a slender stem are to be met with, while a sky-blue flower is known as the Camp forget-me-not, though it is far larger, and of rather an orchid-like shape. Other ordinary Camp flowers resemble the yellow marguerite, and yet others the marigold.

But the number of these blossoms is legion. One of the handsomest, and, I believe, one of the rarest, is a peculiarly delicate Iris, whose stem is no thicker than a grass stalk. The leaves of this are of a most

beautiful yellow. They start, moreover, from a rounded bulb of a calyx which is silver white, and as perfectly transparent as a thin sheet of crystal.

The cactus abounds in most districts, the brilliant flower of the prickly pear as well as of the cereus giganteus serving to brighten the landscape. Hedges of the prickly pear are common.

In certain districts a poisonous plant of the family of the solanaceae (which includes the Henbane, Nightshade, etc.), is found. This, locally termed the Chuchu, is apt to poison horses, should they feed upon it.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

FROM ATLANTIC TO PACIFIC.

From Buenos Aires to Mendoza—Aspects of the route—Mendoza to Las Cuevas—A climb into solitude—Transandine stations—The fascination of the inner Andes—Cordillera colouring—A mule journey to the "Cumbre"—The frontier—Appearance of the Chilian slopes—Junction to Guardia Vieja—Vegetation on the road—Guardia Vieja to Los Andes—A pleasant route—The Western terminus of the Transandine.

At the Retiro station of Buenos Aires the early morning of three days in the week will see a string of oak-coloured coaches that wait alongside the main platform in readiness to start. The monogram B.A.P. upon their sides stands for Buenos Aires and Pacific. As a clue to destination the lettering is not necessarily specific, for the brand lies upon all the rolling stock of the Company, whether bound for long or short distances. But in this instance its intepretation may be taken as literal, for the coaches are actually about to commence the first stage of the journey from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

With this in mind, one boards the train, feeling much as though one were stepping upon the deck of a liner. The illusion is heightened by the arrangements within the coaches, for, leading off from the long corridor, are separate apartments that resemble ship's cabins in size and in general appearance. Here one may deposit the travelling bags, and unpack them if one will, secure in the possession

CHILIAN SLOPE OF THE ANDES.

CHILIAN CACTUS.

Facing Page 304.

of a temporary home on wheels that is free from jostling elbows.

The groups that line the platform have much the appearance of those about to wave their farewells from the edge of a wharf. For it is a far cry to the Pacific. All but 900 miles stand between ere the sight of the yellow La Plata River is exchanged for the deep blue that fringes the other coast. Hence the portentous countenances of the well-groomed Argentines, of the scattering of priests and nuns, and of the cosmopolitan remainder of the gathering. Further along, where stand the second class coaches, is a more motley crowd that surrounds some departing Italian labourers. The baggage of these latter is frankly domestic, and among the rest of their goods and chattels are their inseparable camp beds.

The first movement of the train is slow, almost imperceptible, as though it realised at the start the importance of the journey. It is not until the waving figures at the station have been left far behind that it settles into its steady race across the plains. The aspect of the flat stretches is varied only by the crops they bear. There is maize, maize, and yet more maize. The engine speeds between mile after mile of the spray of blossom above and the densely-set leaves beneath. When the tall green with its myriad spires has at length fallen away to give place to the more lowly alfalfa with its purple blossom, it is almost as though the level of the earth itself had sunk. After that the natural grass of the Camp will spread itself on either hand; then will come the turn of the alfalfa and of the maize once more. The ocean

of verdure is marked by variations in this sequence for twenty hours or so, long after the night has intervened.

With the early morning the scene has changed. The country in the immediate neighbourhood has broken out from its dead level into undulations that roll here and there. Upon the horizon long, grey shadows give promise of distant altitudes. The tall pampas grass stands out ever more frequently in its feathery clumps, while in places the rank vegetation mounts high above the backs of the horses that graze amidst it. Then of a sudden one has run into the midst of a land of vineyards. There are vines in fields; vines upon cane structures that, leaf-shadowed, resemble long tunnels; and there are vines, again, clinging to the long poles which train them in mid-air from one poplar tree to the next. Set at intervals in the midst of these, are small terra-cotta-hued houses of hard mud brick and with thatched roofs. These increase both in number and in size until the picturesque streets of Mendoza itself open out by the side of the line.

It is at this point that the traveller is transferred to the narrow gauge train that will beard the solitudes of the Andes. The mountains are plainly visible from here, the dark foreground backed by the soaring snow-peaks glowing in the morning sunlight. But, nothing daunted, the train heads straight towards the heights. Its course lies at first through vineyards again, through peach orchards, and groves of fig trees, until these give way to the cactus and scrub that cling to the boulders of the foothills. The

brown Mendoza river with its cascades of chocolate foam, comes tumbling down to meet the ascending train, while the mountain sides, bare now, but resplendent in their own hues, close in more and more.

Here and there, where the nature of the ground permits, is a tiny station—a somewhat forlorn outpost of human life that consists of little beyond a shed, a water tank, and a pile of wood-fuel for the engine. The sole occupants of one of these are a woman—and an alpaca. And as the woman, leaning against the humble building, watches the approaching train with lack-lustre eyes, the alpaca runs to her as though for protection, and hides its woolly head in the folds of her skirt. Truly a quaint couple! To all appearances alone in the Andes, one wonders what sort of a life is theirs. The very dead must be more lonely here than elsewhere. The occasional cairn with cross above it that marks a grave by the side of the line may have a second pathetic heap for company, but little else.

All is solitude now; but the engine, mindful of labourers upon the track, whistles shrilly as it rounds each curve. It has passed the Puente del Inca now, the natural bridge that is one of the wonders of the neighbourhood, and has penetrated to the upper fastnesses of the range. One is in a land of torrents that fall giddily from above, of chasms, and sheer rock walls of hues so vivid that it is as though the stony faces, deserted of vegetation, had garbed themselves thus in flaunting defiance. Meanwhile, the snow has been pressing ever downwards in the

branch-like lines of the hollows until it lies in broad folds hard by the side of the line. One final clamber for the engine, and Las Cuevas, the Argentine terminus, is there. And all the while—shades of the Conquistadores!—one has watched this stupendous scene, the greater part of which has never known the foot of man, from the depths of an easy chair! One has gazed upon the tormented river, whose course the track has followed, over the five or six courses of a meal, and has peered downwards into the yawning gorges through the comfortable vapour of coffee steam and cigar smoke.

Once at the valley of Las Cuevas—itself at an altitude of over 10,000 feet—one is in the heart of the Cordilleras. And here, if one have the opportunity to remain for a few days, the experience is well worth the while. There is a weird and tremendous fascination in the neighbourhood. Indeed, it is necessary, when attempting to deal with the aspects of the main Andes, to approach the subject in a spirit of caution. For the portrayal of so vast a matter is apt to involve a reckless waste of prodigal language in the vain chase after words sufficiently grandiose. The land amidst the mountain tops breathes forth its own peculiar life and colouring upon a scale that is apt to overwhelm the new-comer into its solitudes. One might imagine that when the lower slopes had been left far beneath—those first, swelling foot-hills so richly garbed in trees and grasses and flowers—that the borderland of bright hues had been passed and done with. It is true that the higher masses of the Andes own but two features,

SHEEP ON THE URUGUAYAN CAMP.

rock and water, out of which to fashion the peculiarities of their world. Beyond these there is nothing except the narrowed sky—and this will not alter its blue or grey even for the Andes.

But the region can glow with many colours as well as lose itself in profound sombreness. Here, there is no hesitation between light and shade; the line between the two is drawn, as it were, by a knife. So far as the rock is concerned, the facets on which lie these alternate glittering and dark patches are huge almost beyond conception. They are flung, moreover, in perpendiculars and angles of an abruptness that it is difficult to associate with such ponderous folds of country. There is no sameness, no monotony in that land of upheaval. One may watch a mounting wall of hundreds of acres set on edge, shining darkly in its lava black. It will rise thus to a point at which it breaks into a throng of cones and pinnacles. Of brilliant orange from their base upwards, they stand as clear apart from the rest as a cathedral from the ground on which it lies. Hard by will be other blocks and spires of green, violet, yellow, and pink, painted with overpowering boldness upon the landscape. Here again will be a broad track, abruptly shadowed in mauve, that winds down a mountain side. It is difficult to believe that it is not a highway of men, well-engineered, and sunk into the rock with perfect regularity and smoothness. So convincing is the illusion that nothing short of the reflection of man's impotence to scale the wall of stone whence the cutting starts is likely to destroy it. That which might be a turnpike road so

strangely situated is nothing more than a dried watercourse.

But though even such mountains as these know their playful moods, when they send out sparkles of light from each point upon their surfaces, their aspects are more concerned with the deeper majesties of their structure. To gaze aloft from the bottom of one of those profound depressions that lie within them is proof of this sufficient to leave the beholder breathless for the first moment. From such a spot one may follow the upward course of the first tier of rock as it starts upon its rise. At the point where the sombre, towering barricade breaks off, its place is supplied by another wall that wells above it from behind. With the play of the upper light upon them, these second precipices are swathed in the beginnings of a glamour that has smoothed away from them the terrific sense of menace with which the first tier would seem imbued. To gaze beyond the culmination of these higher piles is to strain the head far backwards. But there, shining from far above the topmost edges of the middle strata, is that which none but a region such as the Andes can show. It is a vision of crystal peaks poised aloft in an aerial cluster of snow-white transparency. It is a dazzling glimpse of another world seen through an undermantle of the fleeciest cloud that is yet more opaque than itself. So it hangs, an earthly heaven far above the Hades of the lower rock—as sublime a contrast as even the Andes can offer.

The influence of these high solitudes is upon the waters as well as upon the land. The torrents of

such rivers as the Mendoza and the Aconcagua have taken to themselves a curiously hard look. It might be volatile metal that is flung, tossed and heaving, upon its downward course. The foam itself, by some strange optical delusion, would appear stationary and fixed. The highest writhings of a closely set series of rapids remain ever at the same height, and one realises vaguely that there is something in common after all between that wild turmoil and a tame fountain set to a given point. Pink and grey and brown in turn, the water will indulge in queer freaks of contrast with its setting at times. At others, stream, banks, and mountain side are painted in a single unbroken tint. The effect is photographic, and, moreover, strangely unreal. From above, the cascades sweep the rock, disappearing at intervals within the snow-beds to emerge from the dark lower mouths of the tunnels, still whiter than had been their cold roof. But their purity is fleeting, for in the end they dash their puny torrents to perdition in the stained flow of the main river.

To enumerate a tithe of the lights and shadings of the region, however, would be impossible here. There is an added glamour, too, that the early morning and evening hour lends. The broad sunset shafts that stretch their bands of soft illumination across the tops of the darkening gorges—the sight of these alone is sufficient to repay a long day's journey.

But to continue—towards the Pacific. Starting from Las Cuevas, it is the turn of the mules now to bear one higher yet. These, pattering with their small hoofs over boulders and stones, and through

the streams of snow, bear their riders steadily onwards. Behind, comes the procession of pack-mules, laden with luggage, in company with their native guardians in bright-coloured ponchos. The long-drawn cries of the latter rise up in the still air. "E—a—i—. Wha—a—!"—the sonorous chorus is repeated at short intervals.

And so to the Cumbre, the summit of the pass. Here the gigantic figure of Christ stands out in solitary grandeur. Raised to commemorate the treaty of peace between the Republics of the East and West, the statue was cast from cannon captured in the Paraguayan war. And here it rests, plain to view in summer, lost in the winter's snow, but with arm raised in blessing all the while.

Near by are the frontier posts. With "Argentina" inscribed upon the one side, and "Chile" on the other, they are significant of politics, of delimitations, and of the science of measuring. But, set here in this vast pandemonium of rock, they are but ironical pin-points after all. Were they flung half a dozen miles to the East or to the West, there is neither a nation, a man, nor even a condor, whom their displacement could trouble.

The grade is downwards now. At intervals rise the squat structures of the small, round huts of refuge. The track leads past the icy waters of Lake Inca, and the first torrents of the river Aconcagua. And, as one descends the Western mountains, there comes a point where a profusion of a golden-yellow blossom, akin to a nasturtium, blazes out, thriving, as it were, upon the very rock. At Juncal, where the

coaches wait, the aspect of the country has already become softer. Thence downwards the precipitous bareness of the rock becomes more clothed with verdure at every step, while the rich carpet of the many-hued field flowers begins to mingle with the tall cactus upon the smiling Chilian slopes. The snow sheets are far to the rear now: the waterfalls splash downwards more daintily within their gentle surroundings. One is rid at length of the awesome conviction that one is less even than a fly clinging to the side of an abysmal universe. With the reclothing of the land one becomes human and aggressive once more, until at Guardia Vieja, where the iron thread of the rails is received, one feels mainly a profound pity for the comparative lowlanders whose country one is on the point of entering.

But there is far to go yet ere any lowlands worthy of the name may be entered. The train speeds along down its steep gradient, curving, and all but circling at times. Past the Salto del Soldado it goes. The spot—"the soldier's leap"—is a chasm celebrated as the scene of a daring deed. During the war of liberation a Chilian soldier, lance in hand, is said to have sprung from one brink of the abyss to the other, and thus to have escaped his Spanish pursuers.

By its side is always the River Aconcagua, just as the Mendoza kept the other company as it mounted. But here train and stream are each making for a common goal. The aspects of both rivers are strangely alike; the waters of each are equally brown, foaming, and tumbled. But the setting of

the Aconcagua is incomparably the pleasanter of the two. Here, after a while, stretch by its side green meadows thickly carpeted with blue, red, and white flowers. There is the universal cactus, and a dwelling here and there, surrounded by groves of poplar, from the midst of whose leaves break out great patches of scarlet parasite honeysuckle. As the slopes grow ever less steep, the Aconcagua rolls more easily and quietly, and the vegetation spreads ever more, until the houses of Los Andes proclaim a veritable town that is the terminus of the Transandine Railway. Here one parts from the latter, and from the guides of the Villalonga express whose agents are so extremely efficient in facilitating the long journey. Well in Chile now, it is the turn of the Chilian State Railway to take up the route.

CHAPTER XXIX.

VALPARAISO.

The Chilian State Railway—Financial guards—Quaint rolling-stock—The journey's end—The Pacific—Some Chilian characteristics—Valparaiso—Site of the town—A city of precipices and lifts—Some questions of traffic and paving—The Valparaisan cab-driver—Aspects of the port—Tram-car ethics—Fisherman's Bay—A bathing resort—Agreeable methods of procedure.

Once in the Chilian State Railway, one may notice a perceptible change in the railway atmosphere. A certain air of *laisser aller* and of a perhaps ultra-domestic homeliness pervades both the train and its officials. The guards are chatty, and apparently operators in finance as well. At all events, they are most anxious to convert into Chilian coin any Argentine cash that the traveller may have upon his person. In the intervals of punching tickets they talk with the glib tongue of a broker of the current rate of exchange—or of their version of it.

If it be evening the light in the carriage may grow very dim, or it may go out altogether—it frequently does in the Chilian State Railway. A protest to one of these same finance-loving officials will reveal the fact that he is guardian of the illumination as well. But the cause of its failure, as he will explain, is no fault of his. When he is allowed no more than four litres of paraffin to last eight days, what can he do? A little well judged persuasion, however, will overcome his economical scruples, and produce a faint flicker in the lamp once more.

But it is well, if possible, to make this run by daylight, for the first impressions of Chile thus obtained are very pleasant. As one speeds along the level valley that lies between the mountain spurs on either hand, there is a vista of fields encircled by mud walls, of gardens that blaze with gigantic sunflowers, bright blue hydrangeas and other blossoms. There are the native trees, and the olive and acacia together with the eucalyptus, and the ubiquitous poplar bearing the bright scarlet blossom of its parasite. There are fruit trees, too, and bamboo hedges, and others that would exactly resemble those upon an English countryside, were they not thickly starred with red and white roses. Upon the distant hills, too, the tall cactus lies as densely as asparagus in its bed. At the stations are crowds of fruit sellers that bear multitudes of baskets laden to the brim with their edible wares. Here one may notice the rolling stock of which the less important trains and, above all, the goods trains are composed. Some of these latter wagons afford a revelation of what utter debility can be run upon wheels. The sides and roof are of worn corrugated iron. As the wagon is brought to a standstill, the entire upper-structure bends forward to the strain of the breaks, creaking in its fragility. And upon one of these one may read the inscription that it is designed to hold either four horses, four mules, or twenty-six men. The compliment to mankind is, to say the least of it, indirect!

But the Chilian engine-driver, for all the doubtful quality of his rolling stock, is no sloth. The mail train, however much it may rattle and shake, speeds

A FOREST NOOK, URUGUAY.

CORRAL WORK, URUGUAY.

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across the plain at a pace that leaves nothing to be desired. A change of carriage at Llai-Llai, the principal junction of Chile, and shortly afterwards the end of the journey is in sight. On the right hand side are glimpses of deep blue water. A few more minutes, and one is at Valparaiso—and on the Pacific shore.

Once settled here, the differences that distinguish the countries to the East and West of the Andes become immediately apparent. To one accustomed to Argentine financial ethics the comparative cheapness of all things in Chile comes as a pleasant revelation. As a compensation for the far less marked evidence of wealth, the purchasing power of money is practically doubled here. But the distinctions do not end with this. Whether the cause be climatic or a modification of the racial blend, the temperament of the average Chilian differs widely from that of the Argentine.

The ultra sensitiveness and the occasional somewhat morbid pride of the latter is wanting in the other. The Chilian is a happy-go-lucky, roystering, jovial blade who thoroughly understands the rough and ready methods of an off-hand *camaraderie*. Of fine physique, he is of a peculiarly fearless disposition. Indeed he possesses all the Irishman's love of fighting for the sake of the sport itself. When flushed with the fumes of his native wine and spirit, he is peculiarly ready for any entertainment of the kind, as any mine-manager, bearing in mind his reminiscences of the normal pay-day happenings can testify. But after a few exchanges of knife-

slashes he will bind up his own and his opponent's wounds in a spirit of perfectly renewed friendship, and will continue the less aggressive programme of his conviviality as though nothing had occurred.

It will be evident from this that the Chilian of the lower orders, unlike the Argentine, possesses no objection to looking upon the wine when it is red. In view of the number of vineyards that cover the land, and of the quantity of cafés that the towns hold, his opportunities to this end are sufficiently abundant. But, notwithstanding his occasional slidings from the severer paths, he is, in the main, an industrious and excellent workman.

The Chilian of the educated classes bears a marked resemblance to the Englishman both in outward appearance and in his habits. A young naval cadet at Valparaiso might have stepped straight from out of the doors at Osborne. A similar Anglicised appearance prevails throughout—in the world of commerce, officialdom, and sport. Amongst others, hospitality and a marked *joie de vivre* are their attributes.

The pride of the Chilians, the self-styled Britons of South America, is centred chiefly upon the stately town of Santiago. Nevertheless, although its buildings have not attained to the grandeur that those of the capital can boast, Valparaiso stands as a rival to the inland town in natural beauty. A those of the capital can boast, Valparaiso stands as the present moment, owing to the recent earthquake which has visited the ill-fated city. Since that lamentable event there is undoubtedly much that must

be told in the past tense instead of the present. Nevertheless, as the damaged parts of the City are now slowly rising again, it is permissible to employ the "is" throughout, in the hope that the gaps in the present will be entirely filled ere long.

In any case, however much it has suffered, the "Vale of Paradise" sits in a queenly fashion upon the shores of the Pacific. Spread upon a series of mounting slopes, its roofs rise in tiers that start from the edge of the profound blue of the ocean. The cactus-covered hills beyond present a rolling vista to right and left, while surrounding the valleys to the back, they sweep in an almost unbroken series to the foothills of the Andes themselves. As a port, Valparaiso is to the West of South America that which Liverpool represents to England. But the former possesses an advantage over the latter in that, in addition to its status as a centre of shipping and commerce, it is also a bathing and pleasure resort.

To the stranger who visits it for the first time an exploration of the city is fruitful in surprise. It is a town of sudden precipices that stand out here and there in places where one would least have expected them. One may walk along a street, for instance, to find, after rounding a sharp curve in the roadway, that further progress is blocked to all appearances by a lofty wall of rock, hung here and there with clumps of verdure and festoons of flowers, that heaves itself upwards as a barricade across the end of the thoroughfare. But the Valparaisan understands well enough how to deal with an obstacle such as this. At the foot of the precipice reposes a

small station, and after a minute's pause or so, one may watch the box-like framework of a lift as it floats upwards. It would seem to have broken out through the roof itself of the building to climb along the face of the cliff to the plateau above. At every turn in the centre of the town one may come across a precipice of the kind. But as obstacles to progress they have utterly failed. For each is harnessed with its attendant lift, which mounts and falls in unceasing contempt of the barrier.

Compared with cities such as Buenos Aires and the like, the charm of Valparaiso is rather of the homely and picturesque order. It is innocent of electric tram-cars, and of such other elements of extreme modernism. So far as the pavements of its streets are concerned, a drive through the town in any vehicle other than a horse tram-car will certainly leave an indelible impression upon the mind, and not improbably upon the body as well, of one who has experienced this method of progression. Indeed, the joltings of the wheels as they pass from one large stone to another makes it a difficult matter in many places for the traveller to retain his seat at all. If for no other reason than this, the life of a Valparaisan cab driver can scarcely be a thing of unmixed joy. This latter, however, continues to bump along in philosophic calm. As soon as his vehicle is at rest, nevertheless, he becomes intensely busy. Producing an ostrich feather brush from some recess or other, he immediately commences to occupy himself in dusting the interior of the cab. This occupation would seem to exercise a similar fascination in his case as the

SHEARING.

SHEARING.

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polishing of brasswork does in that of a sailor. Whether the dust be there or not—it must be admitted that in a Chilian summer there is usually sufficient of this—no sooner has the horse come to a halt than the driver is within the vehicle, and the brush has commenced to work with fierce energy.

Valparaiso, as has been said, is probably the most anglicised of all towns in the South American Republic. The English tongue, frequently employed by Chilians, may be heard with comfortable frequency in the streets, while not a few of the streets themselves possess names that ring with a homely sound in English ears—with that of Admiral Cochrane well in the forefront. In the Bay itself lie his legacies to the Chilian race—trim, white warships, with yellow funnels, modern, efficient, well officered and manned. Should the occasion arise, these would undoubtedly prove a formidable fleet to tackle, for the Chilian has proved to the hilt his prowess on sea as well as on land. They ride at anchor amid the crowd of sombre cargo boats and the swarm of black barges much as swans sit among a brood of soiled ducklings.

The Port itself is a busy enough spot—when the winter's gales have not driven the shipping in terror from the open roadstead of the Bay. It is in the broad street that lines the waters edge that the shore life of the city is most evident. Here are porters, labourers, dock-hands, and teamsters, all occupied with their business, and all more or less independent in manner, as becomes true Republicans. The longshoreman, too, is there in hordes, with the usual offer

to hire out his boat or to ply it himself. To do him justice, his piratical tendencies are less developed than those of the majority of his South American brethren. Through the crush of pedestrians come the trains of mules, their slim bodies hung about with almost every conceivable article—wine-casks, sacks, loads of iron, pieces of furniture, perambulators. There are others laden with huge panniers of hide on either side, each laden to the brim with a variety of smaller objects. There is no such thing as a Plimsoll mark in South American manipulation of animal-borne freight. It would seem an accepted theory here that, provided the burden will fit the pack-saddle or pannier, the mule will bear it.

Now will arrive a string of carts, drawn in the fashion of the country. Inside the shafts is one horse, while another, bearing a rider upon its back, is attached to the cart by means of a single rope. Thus the rider, with a certain degree of latitude allowed him, may proceed, postillion-wise by the side of the other horse, or may act on his own initiative if he choose. The street is crowded, and the rattling of the wheels and of the hoofs upon the cobble-stones somewhat overpowering, when above this and every other noise sounds a new note. One imagines that a church is drawing near, tolling its bell as it comes. As the deep clanging approaches, the pedestrians move clear of the roadway; a rider here and there urges his steed onwards by means of his huge, plate-like spurs, while mules and horses, with the pack saddles and carts, are flogged back and driven hastily to one side. Then up the centre of

the road comes a train. It is a Chilian State train, it is true, of antiquated and mouldy appearance. But seen thus, its engine is a ponderous and imposing thing, looming large above the press of conveyances that have of a sudden grown so fragile and tiny. And then, when it has lumbered through and gone, the space that it cleared for itself has been filled again, and the clatter will continue until the next interruption of the kind.

But Valparaiso has much to boast of beyond the mere commercial ethics of its port. It has its plazas, the statues of Chile's great in their midst, flowered, and dotted with palm trees, where the Chilian ladies glide to and fro, and where the naval officers and cadets, both of such strangely British appearance, and the military, in uniforms of German pattern, promenade to the strains of the band. It has its stately churches towards which on a Sunday go the streams of Chilian women whose beauty has passed into so well merited a proverb, swathed in their native black "mantos" for the occasion. It has its tram-cars too, with their women conductors in holland costumes and straw hats. The vehicles can boast of two classes, first beneath, and second above. It is a point of honour here with a first-class passenger to stand, if necessary, in an already crowded space beneath rather than court indignity and a restful seat above. It is a little weakness of the Valparasan, a concession to social ethics over which even a Republic has no control.

But, notwithstanding this, the Chilian is nothing if not jovial. He will dance in the early hours of

the morning in the fashionable suburb of Viña del Mar to the light of illuminated fountains that pour out their waters, sparkling in all hues. He will set out along the coast to the South, too, following the road that lies between the cliffs on one hand, and the huge rocks that bestrew the beach on the other. The cliffs are covered with geranium, nasturtium, and with bright patches of the Californian poppy that has taken so kindly to the soil. The rocks, alas! are covered in a different fashion—with advertisement phrases daubed in heavy black lettering upon their surface. But even these latter can do little to mar the picturesqueness of the way as it winds, now past the sheer face of the cliff, now past groups of cottages with wooden galleries, and collections of double-bowed boats. Then, when Fisherman's Bay has been reached, the Valparasan will betake himself to the bathing pavilion, and will revel in the sandy stretch set between the wilderness of rocks to right and left. And when his swim is done, he will seat himself in the restaurant to watch the rest, sipping some beverage the while. For the Valparasan, virile though he is, studies the comforts of existence as keenly as other men. Such is a very brief sketch of existence in the seaport of the Pacific—before the catastrophe. And it is scarcely likely that the light-hearted Chilian will permit even this latter to weigh too heavily upon his memory for long.

CHAPTER XXX.

URUGUAY.

A pastoral land—Area of the Republic—Progress—Population—An Uruguayan table of comparisons—Montevideo—Its harbour works—Salto—Paysandu—The Railway system—Uruguayan currency—The livestock census—Some exports—Vine and fruit cultivation—Some aspects of the country—Intermittent streams—The water stone—Camp roads—Climate—An old Spanish law—Fireflies.

The passage of the Uruguay River reveals a landscape altogether different from that which one has left behind on the Argentine bank. In place of the dead level of the Entre Rios or Buenos Aires shore is a rolling country, in the hollows of whose undulations are numerous streams that wind their way between stretches of woodland on either hand. With the crossing of the broad river, too, the areas of wheat, maize, alfalfa, and linseed have disappeared. A stray field or two thus covered may be met with, it is true, but they are few and far between, for Uruguay is by nature a pastoral country pure and simple. The grass that covers the rolling land is of natural growth, and for the purpose of grazing none better could be desired.

Uruguay with its area of 72,000 square miles is the smallest of all the South American Republics. Its extent is, roughly, equal to that of the Buenos Aires province of Argentina. The Banda Oriental, to give it its time-honoured name, is a favourable

enough instance of a progressive country, although it must be admitted that its advance has been much hindered by the many revolutions which play so large a part in its history. The condition of the country is by no means so settled as that of Argentina. The cauldron of political discontent, indeed, is in a continual state of boiling over here. It is perhaps for this reason that the progress of the nation is so extolled by those in power. Uruguay is undoubtedly a rich country—but, according to the successful politician, it is an earthly paradise filled with rulers that abound in every one of the virile, and in the majority of the celestial, virtues. In order to obtain a disinterested opinion, a point should be fixed upon midway between these sentiments and those of the party out of power. Even then, however, the verdict would be a deservedly favourable one, so far as the general aspects of the land are concerned.

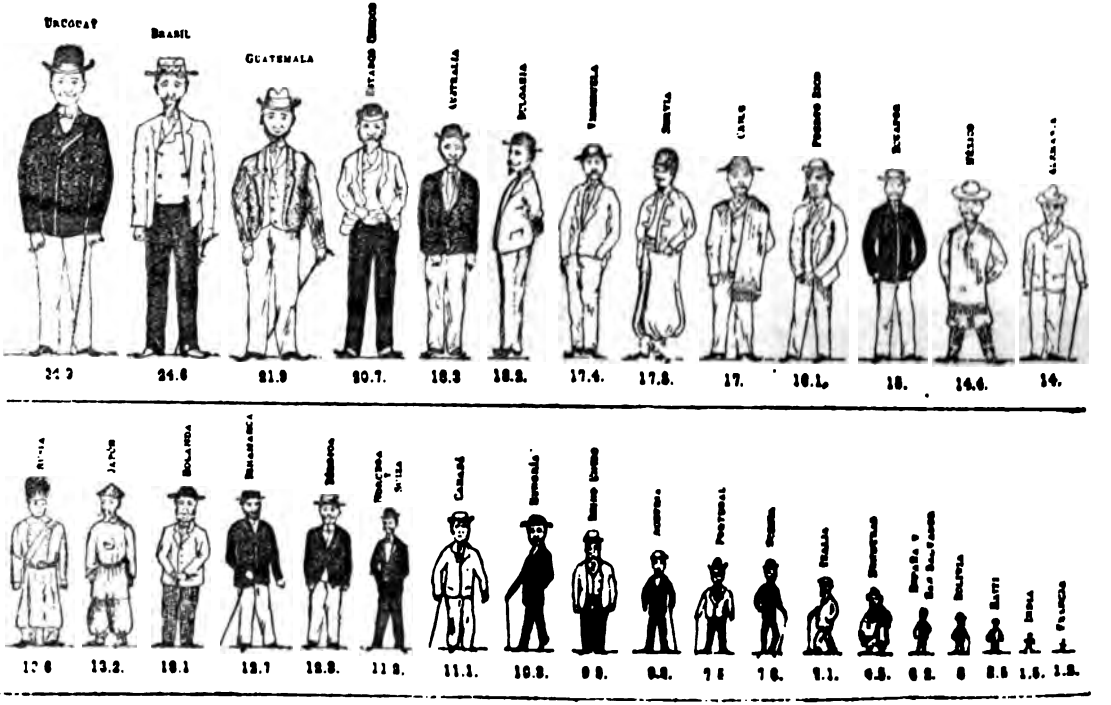
There is extremely little difference between the characteristics of the Argentine and of the "Oriental." Indeed, the personalities and manners and customs of the two are so similar that it is difficult to conceive the reason of their separation. If there be any distinction at all, it lies in the fact that the Uruguayan is—or is generally held to be—of a more bellicose disposition that the other. There are many who attribute the origin of this trait to the more warlike temperament of the old Indian tribes on the eastern side of the river as compared with that of their neighbours. But, although the mingling of blood in both cases is considerable, whether such is

actually the case or not would be a very difficult matter to decide.

The first attempt at a census in Uruguay was made in 1796. At that time the total population of the country was estimated at 30,685. That of Montevideo, the capital, was 3,033 whites, 141 Indians, and 899 slaves. At the time of the declaration of Independence in 1829 the population of the country had grown to 74,000. Since then the strides have been rapid, for the census of 1901 gave the number of the Republic's inhabitants at 964,577. A later estimate in 1904 of the population of Montevideo placed the latter at 276,034.

The accompanying diagram is from a book upon the country by one of its inhabitants, Señor Carlos M. Maeso. It represents the proportionate increase in population of the various nations. It will be noticed that Uruguay, in addition to being the most stalwart and handsome figure of all, is clothed with a neatness and excellence of taste in which the rest would seem lamentably deficient. Argentina, though a neighbour, has been inhospitably excluded from the group, probably for the very sound reason that its stature would prove of an inconveniently large size.

Montevideo is a handsome town containing many fine buildings and some agreeable plazas. In the words of a native writer:—"Existence here is yet more refined than in the old world." It is true to a certain extent that, to quote the same writer, "nothing could be more correct and European" than the life in this town, but this description, it must



PROPORTIONATE DIAGRAM OF THE INCREASE IN POPULATION OF VARIOUS NATIONS ACCORDING TO THE LATEST CENSUS.

be explained, is applicable merely to those periods when the air is free from revolutionary bullets. During its tranquil phases the town is a quiet and peaceful spot. There are some who even term its atmosphere sleepy. As a bathing resort it stands as a rival to the Argentine Mar del Plata. In this respect it must be admitted that it can scarcely compare with the Argentine sea-town. Owing to the vastness of the La Plata estuary there is an utter lack of blue water—or, in fact, of any but a dull brown—at Montevideo. The climate, moreover, although very pleasant, is deficient in that biting freshness which characterises Mar del Plata.

As a commercial centre Montevideo is of great importance. The harbour is now being enlarged and deepened, the work being in the hands of a French engineering company. It is a boast of Uruguayans that this enterprise is the only one of the kind in South America which is being carried on by means of other than borrowed money. When these harbour works are completed it will be possible for the large mail steamers, which are now obliged to lie far out in the roadstead, to be brought to berth by the side of the wharves.

With the exception of Montevideo, Uruguay is lacking in cities of a really imposing size. The town next in magnitude is Salto, the population of which does not exceed 16,000. Salto lies at the end of the first navigable stretch of the Uruguay, falls in the river interrupting the communication by water for a while beyond this point. The town is prettily situated amidst luxuriant vegetation.

Paysandu, situated about a hundred miles nearer to the mouth of the river, although its inhabitants number a thousand less than those of Salto, is a town of greater commercial importance. Beyond the number of "saladeros," or curing works, that lie in its vicinity, it constitutes one of the centres of the meat canning trade. The Cathedral of Paysandu is a picturesque and rather imposing structure, whose twin towers stand out well above the town from whichever aspect it be viewed. The English church here, too, is of considerable size.

The towns of San José, in the department of that name, and of Mercedes on the Rio Negro are the sole remaining centres that can lay claim to an important population. The inhabitants of each number about 10,000.

The country is well served by railways. The two most important lines are the Central Uruguay, which pushes northwards right across the country as far as Rivera on the Brazilian frontier, and possesses in addition a branch line to Colonia and Mercedes, and the Midland Uruguay which connects with the former Railway at the Rio Negro and runs through Paysandu to Salto.

As a most important aid to internal communication this small Republic is most fortunate in possessing a coast line of almost three hundred miles on the magnificent River Uruguay. Along the banks are many small ports, in addition to the larger centres, and fair sized ocean-going craft can proceed upstream as far as Paysandu.

The monetary system of Uruguay differs entirely from that of Argentina. In place of the paper dollar of the latter country, the value of which is 1/10d., the Banda Oriental employs a silver dollar of the value of 4s. 2d. Gold obtains ready currency here, and the English sovereign may be said to have become practically the standard gold coin throughout the country. Curiously enough, its sight is a familiar one, and its correct value perfectly well understood even in the remote spots of the Republic.

Uruguay, as a pastoral land, carries extremely large quantities of live stock. There is room in the country, however, for a far greater number than at present graze upon its pastures. The census for the years 1900 and 1901 gave the following results:—

	Cattle.	Horses.	Sheep.
1900	6,827,428	561,408	19,608,717
1901	6,326,602	575,361	17,624,548

The department of statistics claim, however, that these figures fall considerably short of the actual ones—a rather ingenuous statement in view of the fact that it is this department itself which is responsible for their production. According to the view of these officials, the number of cattle in existence is little short of 9,000,000, while that of the sheep is placed between 25,000,000 and 30,000,000.

This small Republic would seem specially appointed as butcher and general purveyor of provisions to the huge nation of Brazil. The latter, indeed, is largely dependent in such matters upon the small, fertile land to the south of it. Huge herds

of cattle are continually trekking northwards from this latter to the country of coffee and diamonds. Enormous quantities of jerked beef, too, treated on the banks of the Uruguay, are shipped off to Brazil as well as to Cuba. Paraguay, too, was wont to afford a ready market for Uruguayan cattle, but the demand here, except for the finer stock, has diminished greatly since pasturage in the latter country itself has been developed.

There is a certain amount of vineyard cultivation in Uruguay. Viticulture here, however, has not so far attained to any real importance. The grapes grown are most excellent, it is true—as grapes. The resultant wine cannot be termed a success. There are a few favourable exceptions to the rule, but the majority of it is of the order that is best left to slumber peacefully within a corked bottle.

Fruit is as plentiful here as in the sister Republic of Argentina. Peach and nectarine orchards are to be met with in corresponding abundance, while pears and similar fruits flourish more particularly in the Southern districts. Oranges and lemons are more generally abundant here than to the west of the Uruguay river, many of the trees attaining to a great size.

The aspect of a typical Uruguayan landscape is extremely pleasant. The Argentine camp resembles as has been said, a vast ocean in its most unruffled and tranquil mood. That of the Banda Oriental, on the other hand, is akin rather to a succession of long, even waves that roll onwards in a perfectly regulated swell. The formation of the country is for

the most part of gneiss, small rocky areas of which break in many places through the top-soil, and litter the smooth grass exactly in the fashion of boulders upon a beach. Although the rainfall is not so abundant as in the majority of Argentine districts, and droughts, in consequence, are more common, the Uruguayan Camp is far more liberally served by streams. A peculiarity of the country is the deep scoring of its surface, for which the winter rains are responsible. The most strange characteristic of one of these intermittent streams is that it would seem to possess no well-defined beginning or end. As the waters rush down the hill sides their volume is apt to swell to the proportions of a river as they come together in the valley beneath. This will speed down the watercourse that similar rains during countless previous years have already hollowed out, until some formation of the ground adverse to the stream brings the career of the latter to an end. The waters then have no alternative but to spread themselves in a flood about the surrounding country. In the dry weather, though no drop of water lies within them, the tracks of these streams are as plainly marked as the beds of ordinary rivers.

Among the minor peculiarities to be met with in Uruguay is the water stone. This curious object is to be met with in the neighbourhood of Salto. The interior of one of these stones is of hollow crystal formation, which, in turn, is filled with water. As one handles the transparent object, the movement of the air bubble within becomes evident, the effect being somewhat akin to that produced by a gigantic

[illegible]ne. The water in one of these usually [illegible]s after a certain number of years. Should one desire to refill it, however, the matter is quite a simple one. A month's immersion in water will restore its peculiarity to the stone.

The Camp roads of Uruguay are no better than those of Argentina. So far as breadth is concerned, they represent all that could be desired. The national roads, for instance, are no less than fifty metres broad, and the departmental road twenty metres. But the fence line on either hand frequently affords the sole evidence to the traveller that he is in reality upon a highway. In winter the latter may easily be mistaken for an elongated mudhole, while in summer, although the surface is hard and dry, the bumps and hollows that infest it are considerable.

The average temperature of the Banda Oriental is similar to that which obtains in the same latitudes of Argentina, and the general climate is as delightful as any in the world. The periods of greatest heat are experienced, naturally, when the northerly winds from Brazil set in. One hears much of the misgovernment which prevailed during the old-time Spanish régime. Yet there is some evidence of a sound and humane policy in connection with a law which was in force then concerning these scorching winds. It was forbidden for a judge to try a prisoner on a capital charge under the heating and irritating influence of these airs from the North. A trial of the kind had to be conducted under more benevolent atmospheric conditions, and in such a case the legal proceedings had perforce to be

adjourned until a change took place in the direction of the wind. Even if the regulation involved a slur upon the equanimity of the Judges, it doubtless prevented many a hasty decision.

A feature that one cannot fail to notice here during the summer months is the presence of a particularly gorgeous species of firefly. These, known locally as "tulipanes," carry a strangely powerful light, the phosphorescence of which, moreover, burns in a continuous glow. The aspect of these brilliant points of greenish light as they float in stately fashion through the darkness produces the most fairylike effect. The more material—though at such times invisible—portion of the creature is almost an inch in length. Uruguayan ladies frequently press them into service as ornaments, and the effect of a couple of these fireflies placed amidst the coils of the hair or elsewhere is charming.

Tobacco, it may be mentioned, is freely grown in the Republic. The resultant cigarettes are very similar to those manufactured of Argentine-grown tobacco. The rice and cotton industries, too, are now receiving a certain amount of attention. The actual progress made in these, however, has so far proved comparatively insignificant.

Sugar is produced to a certain extent. But the growth of the cane can in no way be compared with that which is effected in Tucuman, Salta, and other northern districts of Argentina. Indeed, although in the larger country the industry promises to develop into a really important one, that of the Banda Oriental

is scarcely likely to make any stir in the outside world, if for no other reason that, compared with the total area, the percentage of ground really suited to the purpose is small.

ON THE UPPER URUGUAY.

TIMBER BOAT ON THE URUGUAY.

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CHAPTER XXXI.

THE URUGUAY RIVER.

A great water highway—Its aspects and peculiarities—Traffic on the river—A maze of islands—A picturesque stream—Method of landing—Fray Bentos—Beauty of the "Lemco" town—A kitchen of the world—The workings and ramifications of the company.

The Uruguay River affords a fascinating as well as a most important water highway. The great stream has its moods. It will change the current of its main channel at times; it will encroach here, recede there, permit islands to form in one direction, and submerge some newly formed land in another. Indeed, it is sufficiently interesting to watch the process by which these islands are continually being formed in the river. First of all will come a silting upwards of sand that will break through the surface of the waters in the shallower parts. Then upon the ever increasing patch of land some twigs and vegetation will be caught. By the time it has attained to a few acres it will be covered already with trees and grasses, and one may watch the development of both verdure and area year by year.

Its great breadth and length notwithstanding, the level of the river is subject to considerable alterations. At the end of a period of lengthy drought, for instance, navigation must be conducted with caution in many spots the normal depth of which is ample for all purposes. During periods of flood the Uruguay

River brings down a number of strange visitors from the more tropical latitudes. Water snakes from Brazil and other foreign creatures are to be met with then. The Camelota, too, that same water hyacinth that has played such havoc with the streams in Florida, comes floating southwards at such times as well. One may meet with it in some of the by-ways of the river, where it has taken root, and flourishes—fortunately, only in moderation.

The lower stretches of the Uruguay, owing to their extreme breadth, are apt to prove perilous to quite small craft during any stress of weather. If one would start from the estuary of the La Plata itself, moreover, it is necessary to beware of the "Pamperos" which sweep the surface with tremendous fierceness. A launch trip, from this point, however, provided the weather at the start be at all reasonable, affords an experience that is both interesting and enjoyable. One may travel upwards along the broad La Plata River for many hours with little indication that the waters which stretch to the horizon are not those of the open sea. The clay coloured tint of the stream, and the clumps of vegetation which float upon it alone give evidence of the actual geography of the spot. The entrance into the narrower stream of the Uruguay is signalled by a distant rim of shore on either hand. From here the interest of the river increases rapidly. With the advantage of a fast moving launch, one may plough through the yellow waters in greater freedom than the set course of the large river steamer permits, and watch at leisure the Argentine plain, and the undulat-

ing Uruguayan shore as they draw nearer to each other.

After a while the white buildings, dotted here and there, detach themselves from the bulk of the land. The bank on either hand is lined with vegetation. That of the Argentine, to the left, clings to the shore in a lowly, unbroken line. To the right it is backed by long folds of the swelling ground, upon which an estancia house and its outbuildings, set in groves of tall trees, are visible from time to time. The river traffic, moreover, has become noticeable in its more confined space. Small topsail schooners, laden with timber and fruit, glide downwards beneath a huge spread of canvas. Lightly built ocean-going vessels that fly the Italian flag lie at anchor here and there. In a line with where the roofs of a small town glitter in the sunshine, a cluster of broad sailing lighters await the advent of the river steamer. Bags of jerked beef are piled high upon the decks, leaving merely the stern of each free. Here rises a massive cooking stove, the top of which the main boom of the vessel only just clears. From out of its various compartments steaming dishes of fish, and "Puchero"—the meat boiled in the fashion of the country—are being handed to the expectant company. One gathers that the Uruguayan lighterman has acquired notions of life such as his brethren in other lands might envy.

But it is not until the spot where the river Gualeguaychu pours its waters into the main stream has been passed that the Uruguay becomes sufficiently intimate to take the wayfarer into its con-

fidence. The banks have shrunk inwards of a sudden, permitting near glimpses of their willow trees, flowering shrubs, and the occasional feathery palm-top that stands out above the rest. Here and there a glimpse of a white sail that seems to peer through the festoons of leaves tells of a boat drawn up within some tiny harbour. Now a stretch of bright, sandy beach will unfold itself between the trees and the water, and now this, in turn, will give way to the abrupt rise of the salmon-coloured bluffs and cliffs that stand out upon the right hand.

One may notice that the stream has taken to contracting itself, and then to widening again with amazing inconsistency. The cause of this apparent elasticity becomes evident after a while. It is through a mass of islands that the passage is threaded—islands of such length and that sit in such lowly fashion upon the water that it is difficult to fix upon the spot which marks their end and the commencement of the more remote mainland. There are places where these islands converge to such an extent that, mistaking them for the true banks, one may doubt whether the end of the navigable Uruguay be not at hand.

As the launch ploughs onwards, breasting the strengthened tide at a passage such as this, a large river steamer, her triple decks crowded with passengers, sweeps down stream from round a bend. As she approaches the narrows the thudding of her engines become dulled all at once. Her speed slackens until she is all but at a standstill, while eddies of a dark chocolate colour well up amid the

yellow waters at her stern. But on the Uruguay it is a small matter to churn for a while through the yielding bottom itself of the river. At the end of a couple of minutes' battling she shakes herself free from the mud, and bustles down stream at her full pace once more.

As the river decreases in width, the islands lessen in size, yet grow ever more numerous. The course of the launch becomes more and more involved. There are buoys here and there that cause the small vessel to swing from the edge of one bank almost to that of the other as she throbs along, following the zig-zag path of the channel. With the sinking of the sun the waters break out without warning into an unexpected display of vivid colouring. The river has become a pale blue, while the cliffs to the right appear to have pressed forward, illuminated in many tints. Then the blue has given way to a brilliant orange. The Argentine bank is nothing beyond a straight black line at the river's edge that seems to hang aloft, dividing water and sky. But with the advancing night comes a dim purple that floods the unruffled surface and the oily grooves in the wake of the launch, until the later grey hues put out the last spark of bolder light.

Guided by nothing beyond a faint lamp here and there, the small craft continues her journey through the darkness of the night. Upon the banks the dancing sparks of the fireflies burn more brightly and die away in turn as the channel hugs the shore or strikes out into mid-river. Beyond this the surroundings are vague and uncertain. But in the

morning the launch is heading towards a small beach flanked by a building or two. As she comes to an anchorage by the side of this, the four horses of a travelling coach enter the river, swinging the vehicle round until they stand with their heads turned shoreward. The rowlocks of the small boat give out their rattle as, leaving the side of the launch, it is pulled towards the waiting coach. It is the simplest landing in the world—a step from the boat into the interior of the vehicle. Then the horse's feet have splashed themselves clear of the waters, and a little later the Uruguay with its wooded banks has been lost to view.

So much for the aspects of the stream that divides Argentina from the Banda Oriental. From a commercial point of view its banks contain much of interest. Lined as they are by "Saladeros" (meat-curing factories), there is one establishment which deserves special notice. Indeed the Liebig factory here appeals to the visitor as something quite apart from the ordinary commercial enterprise of its kind.

At Fray Bentos on the Western Bank of the River rises an upstanding sheaf of coal-black chimneys. They spring from the midst of a number of white walls and roofs that nestle, half hidden by the verdure that clings to the river bank. These buildings, falling away behind the trees to the right, rising to mount a small bluff to the left, have an air of the picturesque that even the frowning, dead-black chimneys can do little to mar. In reality they represent far more than mere buildings—prosaic shelters for men. They stand for nothing less than the

greatest food exchange in the world, where the strength, vigour and vast freshness of the pampas is collected for the use and benefit of the crowded millions of Europe, Asia, Africa and America.

It is difficult to judge of the spot from midstream. The place retains an air of shy elusiveness that is altogether incompatible with its real significance. The avenues and roads that intersect it are wide, smooth, flowered, treed and shaded. Here and there are broad hedges of geranium, groves of Magnolia, stretches of Arum Lilies, while the white blossom of the gardenia, and the soft red of the oleander glow out from amidst a bevy of semi-tropical flowers. The houses on either hand stand, neat and trim, each within its own garden, while an occasional walled embankment beneath its curtain of blossom brings corners of Madeira irresistibly to mind. Indeed the spot is idyllic, and, provided that one keeps to these outer roads, there is nothing which may lead to the suspicion that the premises are those of a Company concerned in the fattening, first of beasts and then of mankind.

It is the stack of chimneys, however, that affords the clue to this. To attain to these one proceeds out of the sheltering vegetation, past a house which, as the Union Jack floating above testifies, holds a British Vice-Consul and a manager at the same time, into a street whose buildings elbow each other in closer proximity until one arrives at the factory itself.

One may walk for hours through passages and through buildings and at every turn light upon a fresh sight, from the meat-cutting machines to the

boiler house with its ten great boilers within it. There are many factories, moreover by the dozen. There is one, for instance, where men and girls are mincing up tongues and preparing them, while close by corned beef is being made ready for shipment. In another department sheets of tin by dint of machinery and electric soldering rise up in segments from their flat surfaces and take shape as cases with marvellous celerity. Further beyond, with a multitude of sheathes of iron, are great wheels, whose rims are a couple of feet and more across, that swing to and fro in a lateral motion as they revolve and grind the guano as it is bagged.

To describe in detail each process of the kind would be wearisome. As a matter of fact, all these stand more or less in the relation of side-issues to the main product, the extract. This, as, starting from the meat cutters, it comes tumbling down the length of its long steel bed in machinery, constitutes the true and only manufacture. The tongues, premature to the steps, horns, hoofs, hides and guano are nothing beyond streams in either hand. The process of refinement, however, which this extract has to undergo during its wanderings is not a little remarkable. Passing in its crude state first of all through a preliminary row of evaporating cylinders that commence the task of relieving it of its superfluous liquid, it passes downwards through a descending gallery of engines. These, steaming, hissing, and whirring, repeat and accentuate the process which the first has begun. One may mark the results of its straining journey at an interval of every few yards.

Thus the substance which at the top starts upon its way comparatively pale of hue, grows thicker and darker at the end of each mechanical onslaught until it arrives, full-brown, within the shining tanks at the bottom which mark the end of its course. One hears of pigs that are swallowed up by one end of a machine and sausages that are ejected by the other, but this is surely as wonderful. For this brown soup which exudes from the steel, is, if not the entirety, at all events the chief part of that herd of animals whose massive hoofs were trampling the earth a few hours before.

A scene such as has been described is repeated each day during six months of the year. Each morning ere the sun has risen peals the bell that gives the warning to all in the neighbourhood that the hour for the death of the cattle is at hand. It is a bell whose tongue claps for no other purpose, a grim instrument upon which alone an essay might be written. During this period of half the year, between two hundred and two hundred and fifty thousand head of cattle surrender every particle of goodness that lies within them. Nothing is wasted; indeed those portions of the carcase which serve to no end whatever are truly insignificant. There are steamers and sailing vessels that lie at the wharf in readiness to be filled with horns, hide, tallow, and other non-edible productions of the beast. In the neighbourhood is a guano drying ground, several acres in size, where men with long rakes turn over the guano much as though they were trifling with the soil of a field. About this spot

the atmosphere is laden to the brim with an odour that compares unfavourably, to say the least of it, with that with which the factory itself is permeated. But even here, amidst the fumes that are overpowering in the full strength of their most prosy odour, the evidence of the poetical is occasionally visible. For instance, I have seen one of the men working with his rake in the centre of this volcano of smell, a red rose stuck coquettishly in his hat. As a study in incongruity, it was unsurpassed: none but a South American would have conceived the idea in such a spot. It has been said that nothing is wasted at the factory which may in any way be utilised. The great heaps of matter which have all the appearance of wet sand may stand as a fair example of this. These are handled much in the manner of sea-earth, and for a time the illusion is complete. Then one learns to one's amazement that the substance which has been thought to be sand is not sand at all. It is nothing more nor less than the remains of the meat from which the extract has been made, the impoverished husks that once held the nourishment. This is shipped to Europe and sold as cattle food. By which means the animals are converted into cannibals, though entirely unconscious of the fact.

It might be imagined that the untimely fate which overtakes a quarter of a million or so of cattle each year might weigh heavily on the consciences of the two gentlemen who reside as managers on the spot. On the contrary, however, they are the most courteous and mild mannered of men, whose minds

seem remarkably free from all care save that for the quality of the extract. For hospitality, moreover, the exercise of which would appear a very genuine creed with them, they are noted throughout the length and breadth of the Uruguayan Republic.

In Fray Bentos the phrase "to live upon air" almost loses the absurdity of its significance, for here the extract floats about in the atmosphere, suffusing it entirely. It enters at the nostrils, remains, and is accentuated by fresh gusts until it is as though the body were crammed to overflowing with bowl upon bowl of soup.

But with the extract itself and its merits I have nothing to do here. My concern is with the aspects, as I saw them, of a company that has beautified a spot that once, but for the scrub that lay about it, was comparatively bare and bleak, that houses its army of workpeople—there are fifteen hundred all told—in model houses and cottages, and that provides them with schools, recreation halls, and every conceivable form of legitimate amusement. The clerical staff has at its disposal a "mess" of a comfort of which many a person of independent means might envy, while of the establishments of the managers—Messrs. Otto Dütting and Luis Meyer—one can say nothing more than that they are worthy of the spot and of those extremely amiable gentlemen.

Electric light thoughout, broad roads, stately avenues, and well-built houses, these are the characteristics of that town of Fray Bentos which lies to the south of that other and purely Uruguayan cluster of

bulls. That the company's efforts are materially repaid by the willing labour of its employés—these latter nineteenth travellers in a land of strikes—is serious enough. At the same time it has been my fortune to see few concerns, however flourishing, in which the interests of one and all were so studiously guarded.

But the Company's interests do not end with the borders of its own. There is a road, well trod and beaten that leads outwards from it through the many leagues of the Lemco estancias that adjoin. And this, well defined in its passage through pasture and scrub, has its own significance. Sixty thousand head arrive now in a year from the company's estancias alone, while the numbers of both estancias and cattle are steadily increasing; and, as these, with the remainder that come from all points of the compass, draw near to Fray Bentos the movements of the vast, tramping herds are recorded as accurately as the visits of a mailboat to her ports. For the outer estancias are connected by telephone with the central office at Fray Bentos. Thus the arrival of the various companies is known beforehand, and the preparations completed. Should one ride outwards over the camp, one may see them in thousands for oneself, a multitude here, ploughing slowly forward with the dull thunder of its hoofs sounding from amidst the floating dust clouds, another there, halted by the side of a lake, the bodies of some plunged deep in the cool waters.

Such are some of the sights that are visible of the actual workings of the company. But its operations,

FRAY BENTOS—THE FACTORY.

A LEMCO MANAGER'S HOUSE, FRAY BENTOS.

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far from being confined to the neighbourhood of Fray Bentos, are evident in Entre Rios upon the Argentine side of the River, as well as throughout the length and breadth of Uruguay. Even in those Northern provinces of Corrientes and Misiones and in the very Republic of Paraguay itself lies league upon league of land that is its property and that sends its oxen from afar eventually to tread the "Camino de los Muertes." As a matter of fact the company's ramifications are far-reaching. There are the expert emissaries who scour the country to inspect stock and to buy; there are the estancia managers who enter into friendly rivalry with one another, and complain should their share of the fine stock which is periodically imported for breeding purposes prove smaller than they had anticipated. These importations from England, by the way, the officials will tell one with pride, have recently included some magnificent specimens from his Majesty's stud. Upon the river, moreover, a small fleet of tugs and launches unceasingly plough the brown waters.

Should one be travelling upon the Uruguay River by night and should chance of a sudden to find the atmosphere heavy laden with soup, one will do well to look toward the Western bank. By a twinkling cluster of lights above which a vast electric arc gleams brilliantly, one may know the spot for Fray Bentos ere even the steamer has dropped her anchor; and, in justice to the place, let it be said that in one who has landed there and known it, the disinclination to miss a second visit is strong indeed.

The company possesses a second factory at Colon upon the Argentine bank of the river, some hundred miles further up stream. This place has recently been very much enlarged, and has been fitted with the latest devices. The same procedure is in operation here as at Fray Bentos, and the spot bids fair to rival the establishment of older standing in beauty as well as in importance. In addition to the factory, an extremely interesting sight here is the large herd of pedigree Polled Angus cattle that the company owns.

CHAPTER XXXII.

URUGUAYAN REVOLUTIONS AND POLITICS.

The depth of party feeling—Ordinary symptoms of revolution—"Colorados" and "Blancos"—An undesired lull—Some causes of civil war—Rough and ready warfare—The Estanciero and revolutions—The inconveniences of the latter—An instance of the necessity of temporising—Destruction involved by the struggle—Gilbertian officers—Criminals and the law—Some instances of legal procedure.

If, as is generally supposed, political steam is let off by means of Revolution, one would scarcely be able to get a glimpse of Uruguay for vapour. But the energy with which, at the end of one civil war, a further one is encompassed would have one believe that in this case *L'appetit vient en mangeant.* As a matter of fact, the political field of the Banda Oriental is never fallow of rebellious seed. Between the two great parties, the Blancos and Colorados (Whites and Reds) there would seem no possibility of fusion. The game of see-saw is continual, and the sole efforts of those beneath are to pull the others down in turn. Neither would there seem any chance at the present moment that the arena of these operations should be shifted from the battlefield to the polling booths. The party in power takes good care as a rule that no such puny machinery as this shall upset their equilibrium of state. Voters may vote, if they like, but if their methods are restricted to so tame a procedure, the government, like the brook, will go on for ever.

But, whatever may be said of its cause, one of these revolutions is by no means a farcical affair in itself. During the period that it lasts the general upheaval is very real. One may judge of the advent of one of these internecine wars by various symptoms. The expressions, "honour," "patriotism," "progress," "civilisation," "national labour," and the like, always dear to the Uruguayan heart, burst forth in an extra fruitful crop on all hands. The police are active, and bands of soldiers move from point to point. Meanwhile rumour is rife, and there is the commencement of a steady exodus of men and horses that cross the river to seek the shelter of the Argentine shore. For there are many Uruguayans who care nothing at all for the revolutions and their causes and objects, and have still less desire to participate actively in them. But, should they remain, they know well enough that they will be whirled up in the human tempest; for neutrality on the part of a native at such periods is unacknowledged.

It cannot be said that progress in other respects has brought about a more peaceful era in the Republic. During the past ten years, for instance, there have been three important Revolutions, to say nothing of some minor attempts which have been passed over practically unchronicled. The Colorado party has now succeeded in maintaining itself in power for a number of years, and so far every attempt to depose it has failed. Its rival faction, the Blanco, is constituted largely of the clerical element, and its views are generally held to be the more conservative of

DON ESTEBAN RIVER, URUGUAY.

ON THE BANK OF THE URUGUAY RIVER.

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the two—that is, on any subject but that of the present government. At the moment the Blancos are greatly in need of funds, and the comparative lull which has supervened for the last couple of years is due to no other cause but this. Indeed, an enterprising millionaire could institute a war here with as much ease as a public library. Nothing beyond a cheque for a few millions to the order of the Blancos is required to set the Republic by the ears. As it is, the question is only one of time before the struggle breaks out again.

There are many Uruguayans of a certain class, intelligent men, who lay the cause of many revolutions in the past at Argentina's door. They assert that the larger country looks with a jealous eye on the progress of its small neighbour, and that it is her emissaries who have succeeded in fomenting strife on several occasions ere now. As a stoppage to progress the method is certainly a sound one, but whether there exists any real foundation for these allegations I am unable to say. In any case, should they be true, one would have imagined that the remedy lay in the hands of the Uruguayans themselves.

The actual causes which bring these outbreaks to a head are frequently altogether incomprehensible to a dweller in a more tranquil land. The alleged reason of one of the recent revolutions was the following. There had been some slight unrest upon the Brazilian frontier, and some "Orientales" had been slain on their own soil by Brazilians. The Uruguayan government, on learning of this, sent a

number of troops northwards in order to protect the frontier at that spot. The district was one, however, in which the Blancos happened to be in strong force, and so incensed were these at the passage of Colorado forces through ground that was held sacred to themselves that a revolution burst out immediately. To prefer the violation of the frontier at the hands of foreigners rather than be protected by compatriots of another political faction is undoubtedly an unique species of patriotism. Indeed, as an instance of a nation divided against itself this could hardly be excelled.

These civil wars are grim proceedings. Kid glove fighting has no hand in them whatever. The methods are as rough and ready as the costumes of the combatants. None but the regular soldiery wear uniforms, and the party to which the ordinary trooper belongs is to be distinguished by nothing beyond a red or a white ribbon upon the sombrero. The incentives to treachery thus supplied are considerable. Instances of this latter, indeed, are numerous enough. The fate of any prisoners that are taken is, to say the least of it, uncertain. It is related that in the days when the British fleet was represented by a squadron in South American waters a British gunboat, steaming up the Uruguay, met one of the latter country's gunboats coming down-stream. The period was a revolutionary one, and upon the deck of the native vessel stood a row of prisoners, bound hand and foot. As the two vessels drew abreast of each other it was seen that these helpless men were being executed in an incredibly atrocious fashion.

A gash was cut in the cheek of each, into which the executioner inserted his fingers. By this means he drew the victim's head back until his throat was in a fit position to receive the final stroke of the knife. In the midst of it all the gunboat saluted the British vessel—a courtesy that met with no response.

But the Uruguayans, as a nation in arms, must not be judged by any such terrible incident. There are desperados on either side who will refrain from no deed of the kind, but a far greater amount of heroism is wont to be displayed, at the same time, than the cause warrants. These ragged, unkempt armies have fought ere now with a devotion and single-heartedness that rival that displayed on better known fields all the world over.

From the Estanciero's point of view these civil wars constitute a serious nuisance, to say the least of it. Although in the case of a foreigner there is little danger to life or limb, the general inconveniences that arise from one of these revolutions are considerable. On the eve of the fighting it is probable that at least one half of his "peons" will have disappeared. A few will have departed to join the arms of either side, and the rest will have slipped quietly over the river to the neutral ground of Entre Rios. At such times the long sight that is the proverbial attribute of the countryman here becomes doubly invaluable. At each estancia there will be a couple of men posted on the highest ground near the homestead. It is their business to scan the surrounding landscape and to give warning as soon as they discern an approaching group of horsemen. At such

periods both parties are eager for fresh horses and men, and companies of troops, searching for these, scour the country in all directions.

Protest on such occasions is useless. The wisdom of the serpent is the sole weapon with which to combat the methods of these raiders, as may be gathered from the experience of an Estanciero who was "caught napping." A troop of twenty-five men, under a captain, arrived without the least warning before the house. That they were government soldiers was evident from the red ribbon upon their sombreros, beyond which, uniform of any kind was lacking. The Estanciero, realising the need of tact, went to greet his unwelcome guests with as much cordiality as he could muster. The captain, whose civility was all that could be desired, explained that he had come with authority to requisition horses and men. Uncertain as he was as to the exact number of each upon the place, his government in its benevolence had given instructions that the Estanciero was to be neither left in the lurch nor needlessly hampered. To this end he was prepared to be satisfied with only a moderate toll of humanity and livestock. He would therefore be pleased to leave one man and one horse behind upon the place - which, by the way, consisted of over forty thousand acres!

It was undoubtedly a case for temporising, and the Estanciero was eager in his proffers of hospitality. These were accepted, and ere long the entire official party was lost in the enjoyment of the best fare that the house could produce. In the meanwhile the

TROOP OF CATTLE NEAR FRAY BENTOS.

majority of the estancia hands, having received the hint, had scampered away with all the best horses to the secure cover of the adjacent woods. When the captain rose from his meal it was only the sorriest and scantiest collection of men and horses that he saw paraded before him. But, though the ruse was clear enough to him, he made no bones about the matter. Well content with the hospitality received at the hands of so "simpatico" a host, he gathered together the attenuated spoils, and departed with many expressions of friendship—after an hour's struggle to produce some symptoms of orderly formation on the part of the twenty-five troops and the new levies.

The damage done to railway lines, bridges, and buildings during such turbulent times of revolution is usually very great. The Estanciero, too, is apt to suffer in more respects than those which concern his livestock. In those districts where wood is scarce, the combatants are wont to lay hands upon every available fencing post for the sake of fuel. The destruction of expensive fence lines in this manner is an extremely serious matter. In some of these districts attmpts are being made to construct these from stone, for no other reason than to frustrate these destructive tendencies on the part of the troops.

There is one aspect of these internal struggles which is purely Gilbertian. It may happen, as, indeed, has frequently been the case, that a "peon" who has occupied one of the humblest positions upon the estancia will return to it in war time at the head of a company of troops, invested with an astonishingly lofty official status. If he has been on friendly

terms with the Estanciero during the fulfilment of his more humble offices, all will go extremely well and pleasantly. If, on the other hand, it chances that he was dismissed from the service of the estate he will take care to render matters as disagreeable as he dare. Many Estancieros of experience bear this possibility in mind, and part with a worthless "peon" of political tendencies in as cordial a manner as possible. It will be evident from this that the choice of officers is somewhat indiscriminate.

The cloak of revolution, as a matter of fact, is a convenient one beneath which to shelter deeds which in ordinary times would rank as private crimes, pure and simple. The period, indeed, is an ideal one for the paying off of old scores. If an insult or injury dealt by Juan to Pedro rankle in the latter's mind, he will in all probability nurse his wrong until the next political outbreak. Then, provided that the same idea has not occurred to Juan and that his aim be not the surer of the two, he will learn of Pedro's resentment at the cost of his life. Such, however, are not the only species of crime to which the national bellicose phase gives sanctuary. One may rob another then, quite irrespective of his party, of a cow, a sheep, or a duck—providing that political motives are alleged. In which case the offence will rank merely as a spontaneous outburst of patriotism.

But so far as criminals are concerned, even in times of peace the sleuth-hounds of Uruguayan law are wont to be a little lax in the chase. Refugees from justice are usually enabled to conceal themselves in the woods which envelop the Rio Negro and its

tributaries for strangely long periods. It is even said that the authorities, on the eve of an election, for instance, are not so anxious for their capture as might be supposed. A criminal, provided he be yet uncondemned, has a vote; and if he chooses to come in and employ it in the right fashion, the fact goes a long way towards proving him worthy of pardon.

The Uruguayan official, however, is a pleasant enough person to meet in the ordinary course of events. Whatever may be his official faults, he is human enough, and civil and obliging to a degree with one who has no direct concern with the politics of the country. He is by no means averse to brushing aside red tape out of mere courtesy and a desire to befriend an acquaintance. But there are times when this red tape, in dealings with those of his own nationality, is brought into ludicrous prominence. A town upon the shores of the Uruguay River recently was the scene of an amusing farce in which the ingenuity of pure officialdom surpassed itself. The affair was started by an infantile quarrel between the children of a police official and those of a civilian. The strained relations culminated in a scuffle in the street which would have been marked by no more importance than a hundred boyish skirmishings of the kind, had not the parents of either party chanced to appear upon the scene. Each espoused the cause of his offspring with such heat and vituperation, that in the end they adjourned to the police station, filled to the brim with mutual accusations of offensive behaviour. At this point the indignation of the police official overcame his

prudence, and he assaulted the civilian in the presence of many witnesses. The civilian invoked the aid of the law. But as soon as proceedings commenced it became evident that there was a serious complication in the case. The question arose whether the police functionary had assaulted the other in his official or in his private capacity. In the former case the issue would have been a serious one for his career; in the latter he could afford to smile at the consequences. The machinery of the law courts was put into motion to test the case. There were numerous and learned arguments on either side, and many adjournments to higher courts. But the vexed question was decided at length. The police official learned to his joy that he had assaulted the civilian in his capacity as a private citizen, and the matter was settled by the payment of a small fine.

The wheels of Uruguayan justice revolve with remarkable slowness. Those who contemplate undertaking litigation in that country should first of all journey to Paysandu. Lying in the river there is a warning against all such procedure in the shape of a large three-masted sailing vessel, the "Maria Madre." Her rust-stained sides, neglected rigging, and generally dilapidated condition are the result of a law-suit concerning her, which in 1906 had been dragging its weary length along for over five years. She is probably lying there still. One thing, however, is certain, that whoever eventually wins the case, the "Maria Madre" in her present condition will prove a sorry reward.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE URUGUAYAN CAMP.

Estancia life—Popular breeds—The "Bichadero" estancia—Some features of the camp—Transparent atmosphere and long sight—An instance of the latter—Some primitive manners and customs—The Village of Sanchez—A place of evil repute—The Uruguayan peon—Former habits and present progress in farming—Methods of selling cattle, ancient and modern.

The existence of the Uruguayan Estanciero is in the main akin to that of his fellow landowner in Argentina. The former is practically deprived of the agricultural opportunities that the latter enjoys, it is true. On the other hand, he is spared the frequent worry that the colonisation of an estate involves. For in the pastoral land of Uruguay there is no *raison d'etre* for the colonist, and the Italian tenant farmer is a stranger in the country.

Another point of difference between the two Republics lies in the breed of cattle encouraged. In Argentina the Durham strain is held pre-eminent, and carries all before it. In the Banda Oriental, it is that of the Hereford which is by far the more popular. The preference in both cases is not confined to certain districts, but to each country as a whole. And, although Uruguay cannot pride itself on having paid such heavy sums for its imported bulls as Argentina, it has nevertheless consistently introduced a fine grade of stock into its borders of late, and can show some specimens of the Hereford

breed which would be hard to beat in any part of the world.

The majority of Uruguayan estancias are extremely well stocked, well equipped, and generally up to date. The "Bichadero," an estate near the banks of the Uruguay some two score miles to the south of Paysandu, may be taken as a typical example of the better class of these. The estancia covers an area of 58,534 acres, and carries over 14,000 head of cattle. The cabaña (stud) here contains many magnificent specimens of the Hereford strain. The house itself consists of a main building from each end of which a wing projects. These latter, being parallel to each other, go to form with the main building three sides of a square. The space within is most tastefully laid out with palms and other exotic growths, and the effect of this open courtyard with its background of verandahs and stonework is altogether charming. An avenue of huge eucalyptus trees leads up to the entrance of the house, and about it are many groves of orange and lemon trees.

The estancia is managed by Señor Rivadavia, a descendant of the famous Argentine General whose name is perpetuated in the nomenclature of so many streets and public places in Argentina. Although the "Bichadero" is only given as one instance of many similar estates, it is difficult to conceive a pleasanter spot.

The Camp, moreover, which is situated in this neighbourhood is of a nature peculiarly agreeable to the eye. One may drive through it for days on end, and yet never tire of the surrounding landscape.

The country lies in long slow folds of grass that is thickly starred with flowers in the spring. Here and there one of the undulations will fall away suddenly as the land sinks in a bold bluff. In other spots the grey rock has broken through the grass to lie in heaps upon a smooth slope. It is across these shoulders of land that the road leads—a thin thread that stretches ever in front, rising and falling. From the high points along its course one may look downwards to where the streams in the deeper valleys are contained in their bands of vegetation, while all about in the near neighbourhood the flowering tops of the long grasses gleam white as snow in the sunlight.

The coach itself, with its sheltering hood above and its four horses abreast, stirs up a whirlwind of tiny life as it sweeps along. Myriads of grasshoppers leap away, rustling on either hand, and butterflies in crowds hover without cease by the way. Now and again the weird form of an iguana will wait expectantly in the open, until the nearer advent of the vehicle will send him in all haste to seek the friendly cover of some thistles near by.

Occasionally a whitewashed hut will stand out by the side of the road, nestling in the centre of a group of paraiso trees. It is a "puesto" (post), and the business of the guardian who inhabits it is the supervision of the surrounding country. It is he who must see to it that the wire fences in his district of the estancia are intact, and that all goes well with the groups of cattle that are grazing in the neighbourhood. At longer intervals will appear a "pul-

pería" a country inn that is frequently little more imposing in its architectural pretensions than the "puesto." Either of these, in any case, afford but the most insignificant break in the rolling landscape.

And when the day, passed in such a journeying, has all but worn itself out, it will become evident that the camp has reserved its most wonderful aspects for the end. The blaze of colour that floods the sky and the hill-tops, a strange variety of dim shades that fill the hollows beneath—a sunset of the kind must be seen to be appreciated.

The clearness of the atmosphere here is proverbial, and the distances at which it is possible to make out objects very great. One may start upon a journey with one's destination in view—a tiny dark patch upon a far-off hill that is in reality the broad belt of timber that lies about an estancia house. And as the four horses swing along, the same patch is visible from every stretch of rising ground. But the slowness of its growth to the sight is amazing. For hour after hour the patch would seem to preserve the same dimensions and the same distance from the traveller. If one has started in the early morning, for all the rapidity of the horses' speed, it may well be afternoon before the objects which compose it are clearly to be distinguished. Even then, when the house, out-buildings, and trees stand out clearly defined, one need not hope to arrive ere several more hours. Even at the very end of the journey the few miles that intervene may well be mistaken for little more than furlongs, so transparent is the air.

With this extent of the horizon that the sweep of

BICHADERO ESTANCIA—ENTRANCE TO COURTYARD.

PEON WITH BULL, BICHADERO ESTANCIA, URUGUAY.
Facing Page 364.

the country permits, the eyesight of those who have lived their lives upon it has become acute in proportion. As an example of this, an incident which befell the writer is instructive. Upon one of these journeys the coach was passing through a denser cloud of butterflies than usual, among which were some interesting specimens of Uruguayan lepidoptera. The vehicle was stopped, and the party occupied itself for a while in netting a number of these latter. Then the coach rolled on again, over the hills and down the valleys, until the estancia that was its destination was reached. By that time, an hour and a half later, the incident of the halt had been forgotten, and it was with no little surprise that the party found themselves being questioned concerning an accident on the road. It appeared that some of the Gauchos who had been on the look out had noticed the delay of the coach. Not only that, they had been able to make out the movements of the figures as they rushed to and fro, and had been speculating in considerable wonder as to the cause. At that time the distance between the coach and the estancia could have been very little less than eight miles.

Owing, perhaps, to the greater simplicity of the purely pastoral life as compared with the agricultural, there are yet some scenes of almost primeval simplicity to be met with in Uruguay. Such are most evident in the north of the country, where a small colony of Brazilians has been settled for a considerable period. In one or two of these homesteads existence is still carried on in the most quaintly

patriarchal manner. For a meal here every available dependent will troop in to the Estanciero's table. His former mistress forgotten in the glamour of the hour, the least "peon" will hold his master's baby, or perform some similar office, while the cook attends to such scanty preparations as are deemed necessary for the table. The food is brought in a large dish, into which each inserts his knife, and helps himself at will. The host, meanwhile, if he would pay special honour to a guest, is occupied the whole while in extracting the choicest morsels with his own long knife from the dish, and in placing them upon the visitor's plate.

There are a number of small towns, too, nearer the more important centres, in which life, as understood in the sole hotel of the place, is conducted on lines that are rather too homely for foreign taste. The chance gathering at a table d'hôte meal here is wont to assume all the aspects of a family party. The senior guest will be chosen as master of ceremonies. These latter, it should be explained, are chiefly concerned in the handling of the one and only napkin which is supplied to the company. It is the duty of the master of ceremonies, after having wiped his own lips, to see that this napkin circulates about the table. When each has employed it in turn he receives it once more into his charge. The same performance is gone through at the end of each course—with the same napkin. Both these and the proceedings related beforehand undoubtedly possess their picturesque attributes. But these latter are least of all evident at the time of their experience.

Between the "Bichadero" estancia, which has already been described, and another similar estate, the "Bellaco," lies the village of Sanchez. The history of this collection of huts is romantic enough, although as sordid as can well be imagined. Indeed, the place savours somewhat of that melodramatic atmosphere that was wont in former times to be associated with all South American Republics alike. The founder of the village was an enterprising Uruguayan whom fate led to the neighbourhood to start in business as an innkeeper, and general dealer besides. But the "pulperia" proved no flourishing concern. The sparsely inhabited district failed altogether in its support, and matters were looking black for the "pulpero," when an original idea entered his mind. He bought some land near by, and erected a few shanties upon it. Each of these he offered to rent at the price of two dollars per year to any chance wastrel that happened to pass that way. As the bargains were clinched, he built more huts, and with the spreading of the place, the "pulperia's" custom grew as well.

Sanchez by that time had attained an evil repute. The men and women that inhabited it were—and are still—of notably dark character. But the innkeeper received them one and all with open arms. Contrary to all the morals in story books, his coffers swelled apace. Turning his attention to business upon a larger scale, he undertook some successful speculations in land, and died, a wealthy man, a few years ago. The district has to thank him for the legacy of the village of Sanchez. Its women are the worst of

their kind, and, as for the men, the most than can be said for them is that where they can beg successfully they will not rob. The few Estancieros in the surrounding district know this well enough, and the Sanchez dwellers generally obtain all that they ask in reason. For the giver is fully aware that a refusal would in all probability mean a midnight depredation, and the loss of far more than he tenders as a free gift.

As one drives through the double row of habitations which constitute the village, it becomes evident at once that the spot is widely different from the average Uruguayan centre of the kind. No single building of stone and few enough even of whitewashed or natural mud are to be seen. Nothing but the meanest hovels line the road. Many of them consist of four poles alone, across the top of which a few branches and thatch is contrived. Within—if indeed it can be termed where there are no walls—may [illegible] man or woman lolling in lethargic [illegible]

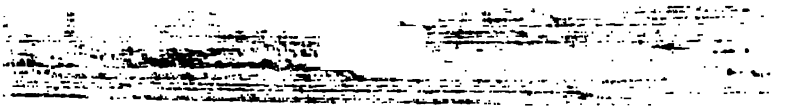
[illegible] of the place stands the "pulperia" [illegible] this into being, and a little further [illegible] strong police post. The influence [illegible] these latter, however, is a per- [illegible] in this case the relations between [illegible] are far too friendly for the general [illegible]

[illegible] of the Uruguayan camp [illegible] be confounded with the Sanchez [illegible] The ordinary "peon" here has many [illegible] He has the pride and the fiery temperament

REPRESENTATIVES OF A COMING INDUSTRY.

A CAPATAZ.

cing Page 368.



of the Argentine, and the good points of the latter as well. As a worker in the service of one he esteems he is indefatigable. His sense of honour is high, and his sobriety indisputable. But to go more fully into his character would mean but a repetition of the previous chapters upon the Argentine Gaucho.

The Uruguayan Camp is becoming more practical and matter of fact each year. Existence on the land has lost that irresponsibility and perhaps too reckless gaiety that was wont to characterise it. Some years ago, for instance, there were scores of Englishmen, well educated and well-bred, who used to pass their time riding from one estancia owned by a compatriot to another, staying for a while at each. The small band was constituted for the most part of men who were content to look upon their chances in life as past, but who were by no means loth to make the most of the present. They were pleasant enough loafers of the kind not unknown in our own colonies, whose business it is to make their company pay for their board and lodging. And, if one had outstayed his welcome, there was a simple enough remedy. His horse would be saddled and brought round to the door—a hint that even the most obtuse could scarcely fail to comprehend. But this army of casual roysterers is no more. With the advent of prosperity came strict attention to business on the part of the Estanciero, and the time that had been devoted to the duties of hospitality was claimed by the cattle instead. But there is sufficient and to spare of the virtue remaining on the Uruguayan Camp yet.

That the business of the Camp is now being con-

ducted on up-to-date lines may be judged from the tendency which is asserting itself to sell cattle by *weight* rather than at so much per head. The introduction of such a system is enough to cause the ancieros of fifty years back to turn in their graves. methods of dealing were different then. When cattle were driven together, and the "Rodeo" rmed, buyer and seller would seat themselves side side, the former with his bag of gold in readiness. rithmetic was weak in those days, and the task of olonged counting both confusing and a bore. So each head of cattle was driven out from the herd, he buyer would hand the other its price, a gold And if one of the animals, in an obstinate roke back to rejoin the herd he had left, the gold onze was snatched back in haste, by which means the correct "tally" was maintained. The procedure was simplicity itself—so long as the cattle behaved themselves. But the slightest *faux pas* meant the commencement of the whole task over again. The modern Uruguayan has discovered that practical methods are more profitable in the long run.

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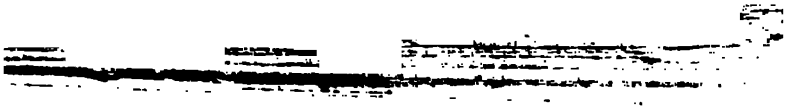

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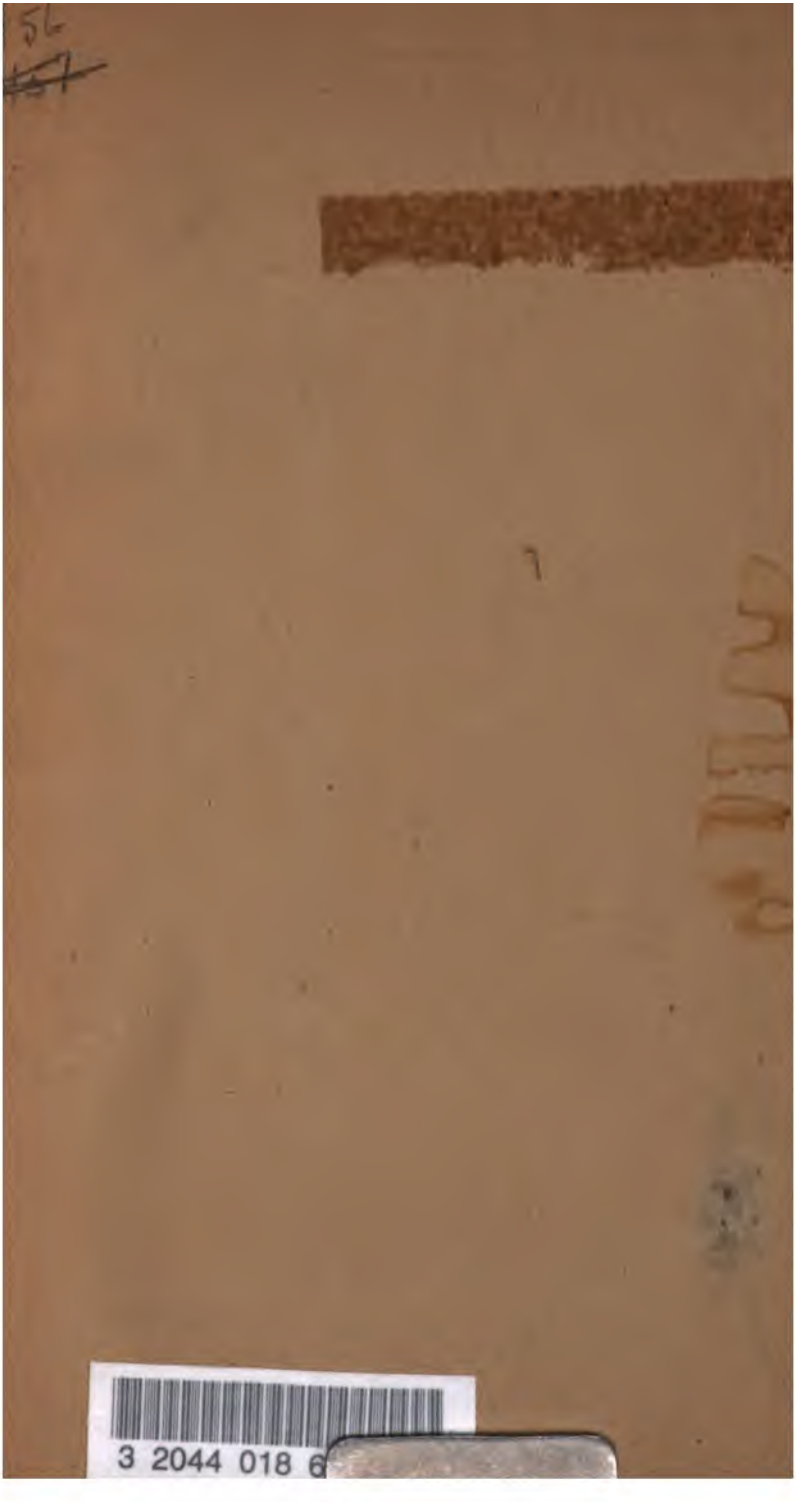
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